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SEVEN TO
ELEVEN

*Some Problems
of the
Junior School*

T. RAYMONT

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SEVEN TO ELEVEN
SOME PROBLEMS OF THE JUNIOR SCHOOL

By the same Author

MODERN EDUCATION

New Edition Revised and Enlarged

THE PRINCIPLES OF EDUCATION

Seven to Eleven

Some Problems of the Junior School

BY

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P R E F A C E

WHEN I was quite a young teacher, my favourite pupils were little fellows nine or ten years of age. To this day I recall many of them vividly—Frank B., excellent in all respects ; Bob S., a dab at sums but a dolt at spelling ; and others whose abilities and disabilities were more on the average level. Down through the years, though my work has lain directly with adult students, I have seen much of junior schools, usually as a friendly visitor, wherever I have resided. In recent years I have seen also a good deal of evacuated junior children in a reception area. Then on the more intimate side there have been family relationships with children of varied interests and capacities. In short, I claim to be no mere armchair theorist, but to write as one who has kept in touch with the facts of child psychology and of school organisation. My indebtedness to official publications, and to authors who have written with special knowledge of particular matters, will be apparent to the reader. The book is not meant to be a complete treatise on the junior school, but rather a discussion of selected problems which appear to me fundamental.

T. RAYMONT,

CARBIS BAY, CORNWALL.

1946

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTORY

WHY SEVEN TO ELEVEN?

The phrase adopted as the title of this book has become familiar in discussions and plans relating to the education of young children. Not only persons professionally concerned with education, but also parents and the general public have become accustomed to the idea that the ages seven and eleven are definite epochs in the lives of normal children, and it is upon this assumption that the State-maintained schools of England are being organised. The observant parent or teacher knows, however, in practice, and the child psychologist knows through scientific investigation, that it is a mistake to attach any mystical significance to these figures. The mistake is not without its dangers, because it tempts the wariest of us to slip into the old bad way of regarding rows of children of the same age as if they were as mechanically produced, and therefore as much alike, as so many rows of pins. We shall presently see in some detail that nothing could be further from the truth.

The English infant school has a long tradition behind it, and part of that tradition is that the child leaves at the age of seven, by which time, be he bright or backward, he should have made a beginning with the "elements" of reading, writing, and number, and should therefore be ready for the later work of the "elementary" school. There was, therefore, a practical reason for fixing seven as the age for beginning the junior school course in the state school system for the children of "the masses."¹ No

¹ As a matter of terminology, it is convenient to speak of Primary Education as covering the Nursery School or Class (2-5), the Infant School (5-7), and the Junior School (7-11).

question of principle was involved, since a skilled observer after a careful examination might be unable to say whether a child is six or seven or eight years of age.

More serious, because fraught with momentous consequences for many a child's future, has been the common assumption that Nature has fixed the age of eleven as the best for causing the child to make a new start in new surroundings. It is not Nature but Man that has done this bit of fixing, and he has done it to suit his convenience. If the leaving age has to be fifteen, there was an obvious convenience in making the junior school cover the first four years beginning at seven, and the post-primary school the four years beginning at eleven. Again no question of educational principle is involved. In this country and climate a child of eleven is still a child. A year or two later Nature asserts herself, and the changes incident to adolescence begin to appear. There is much to be said for making the new start then,—a fact which experience has made familiar in the schools which stand outside the state system, *i.e.*, the public schools and the preparatory schools connected therewith. As to the periods seven to eleven and eleven to fifteen, all one can safely say is that, taking their middle points, there are marked developmental differences between the age of nine or ten and the age of twelve or thirteen.

PREDICTING THE CHILD'S FUTURE

The age of eleven having been fixed, really as a matter of convenience in large-scale organisation, the problem presented itself to the psychologists whether it was possible at that age to foretell what direction a child's interests and aptitudes would take later on, and thus to foresee the kind of post-primary education most appropriate in his or her case. The psychologists of the 1920's, applying their standardised tests, achieved success in discovering the present performance of a child of eleven years, but they were too ready to assume that a child who did well at eleven would

continue to do well at thirteen or fifteen. Teachers had good reason to distrust this assumption, and the psychologists accordingly extended their researches. From about 1930 they began to make careful long-term studies of individual children over the whole period of school life from five or six to fourteen or fifteen years, and they have found that a child's performance at eleven years is not necessarily predictive of his performance later on. Everyone knows that on the physical side a child may seem of stunted growth at the earlier age, and yet may spring up and become quite tall, and it is now known that a similar statement is true on the mental side. The wrongness of fixing children's scholastic future at the age of eleven is not due to faulty estimates of their intelligence at that age. It is due to assuming that these estimates have a predictive value which they do not in fact possess. However convenient the "break at eleven" may be in organising a national system of education, the fact is that nothing as to a child's scholastic career ought to be regarded as unalterably fixed at that age.

FORMER NEGLECT OF PERIOD SEVEN TO ELEVEN

Though it is possible to lay ruinous stress upon the ages seven and eleven, yet the re-organisation of English elementary schools, so far as it has proceeded, and the creation of junior departments, has had one immense advantage. As far back as the 1830's there began to grow up an infant-school tradition for children between three and seven. At the other end of elementary school life attention was gradually concentrated upon the leaving age and its gradual extension from ten or eleven to fourteen or fifteen years. But those years between, the years which form the main subject of this book—what of them? Some one has called this intermediate stage the neglected middle, and except in one sense the epithet was appropriate. Little thought was bestowed upon the right kind of education for a small child promoted from the infant school. In another sense, how-

ever, he was by no means neglected. He was often regarded as an object to be "licked into shape," and this process, to continue the metaphor, was apt to be performed with a rather rough tongue. This was especially true of the boys' schools. The infant schools were always mixed, but in the schools for older scholars, as they were called, the sexes were separated, except when the schools were small, as in the case of rural areas. The sudden change from an infant school and a woman teacher to a boys' school and a man (or at any rate a male) teacher, meant a revolution which might be peaceful or might be violent in the life of a little boy. Happy were the little boys who fell into the hands of a master who understood and liked them. Such persons were not rare, but the ground was not thick with them. In some places a beneficent practice grew up of placing a woman teacher in charge of the youngest children in a boys' school.

WERE THE TEACHERS TO BLAME?

The critic who is inclined to blame the teachers for an abrupt and even startling change in a small child's life, should try to realise the conditions under which teachers were, until recent times, doomed to work. The responsible teachers inherited a tradition of large classes and crowded rooms, and of a curriculum fixed for all schools alike, whether situated in great cities or in tiny villages, in eligible suburbs or in malodorous slums. Moreover, there was always the disturbing prospect of a uniform individual examination near the end of the school year. In some respects these conditions have been altered, but not entirely, for real reforms do not always follow swiftly and automatically upon paper reforms, and tradition dies hard. The process on the disciplinary side described as "licking into shape" was matched on the teaching side by a practice based upon the theory that at the seven-to-eleven stage memory is at its best, and that then is the time for the learning by heart of arithmetical tables, spelling lists, geographical

names, and dates deemed to be important. In a limited sense the practice was a sound one. The motto "fast bind, safe find" is no bad motto for the junior school. The mischief was that learning by heart was so often identified with learning by rote, by incessant repetition without the least understanding. Moreover, little discrimination was made between things that are, and things that are not, worth committing to memory. Those were the bad old days for children of junior school age. No wonder the ages between seven and eleven have been called the dark ages of childhood. That even to-day there is serious under-valuation of the significance of these years there is much evidence to prove.¹

THE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS

There is another sense in which the ages seven to eleven deserve to be called the "dark ages of childhood." It was not only teachers and administrators who treated the years between seven and eleven with comparatively scant regard. The same remark is for different reasons equally true of psychologists and other cultivators of the scientific study of childhood. The period of infancy, the charm of which had already proved an inspiration to Wordsworth and Blake, began later in the nineteenth century to attract the attention of men of science, especially in connexion with the spread of the doctrine of evolution. British educators were indebted to James Sully, the psychologist, whose *Studies of Childhood*, published in 1895, formed at that time an admirable introduction to the subject, based upon his own observations, his study of the previous work of Darwin and Preyer, and his wide acquaintance with the relevant foreign literature. The scientific study of early childhood has continued to be sedulously pursued in English-speaking not less than in any other countries, to the great advantage of the nursery-school and child-welfare movements.

¹ See *Handbook of Suggestions* (Board of Education), 1937, p. 101.

A similar line of remark applies to the study of adolescence, a branch of research which received a strong stimulus from the publication in 1904 of Stanley Hall's extensive treatise, *Adolescence*. Since then the investigation of that subject has been continued, both in America and in Britain, in universities and teachers' colleges, and the results have been recorded in numerous monographs, and summarised in many text-books.

THE EFFECTS OF RE-ORGANISATION

The reasons which have thus attracted systematic attention to infancy and adolescence have not operated in like degree for "the years between," and in fact this part of the field of child-study has been comparatively, though of course not entirely, uncultivated. The re-organisation of elementary education which is now proceeding in Britain, and the emergence of the junior school as a distinctive part of the educational system, are already showing their effects in a more complete study of childhood.

There is one aspect of the seven-to-eleven period which will be specially appreciated by anyone who is, or has been, a member of a fairly large family. I refer to the tendency of the elder children, those who are in their teens, to dominate the social situation, to monopolise the conversation, and generally to keep the smaller fry in their places. They succeed in doing so, unless there are decided "extraverts" among the younger children, whose determination to assert themselves may, however, have for them uncomfortable consequences. In this respect the large family is comparable with the school. The freedom and spontaneity observable in a separate junior school to-day, hardly existed for children of corresponding ages in the traditional elementary school, dominated as it was by the older children. The very presence of the latter accounted in a considerable degree for the "neglected middle," the dark ages of childhood.

INTRODUCTORY

REFERENCES

Report on the Primary School, esp. Chap. IV.

Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers, Chap. III.

S. Isaacs, *The Children We Teach*, pp. 18-23.

C. W. Valentine, *Examinations and the Examinee*, pp. 12-13.

Dearborn and others, *Predicting the Child's Development*.

Chapter II

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

MASS INSTRUCTION OF FORMER DAYS

In the preceding chapter we considered in a preliminary way the justification of a school organisation which involves, among other things, the separate treatment, in a junior school or department, of children between the ages of seven and eleven. Next, we have to reckon with the fact that, even within the most homogeneous section of the seven-to-eleven group, or indeed of any age group, no two children are alike. They are as individual in mind as in body. Along with generic similarity they usually present innumerable specific differences, both physical and mental. The worst fault of the older methods of teaching in elementary schools was the tendency to ignore individual differences, and to treat all children of the same age in precisely the same way. A syllabus covering a year's work was prescribed, and was made to apply to all alike, to the bright and the dull, the clever and the stupid, the quick and the slow. Such a rigid plan was unfair to everybody. The brighter children mastered the syllabus in three months or less, and were too often kept marking time during the rest of the school year, whereas the dull children occupied most of the teacher's attention, in order that they might be got to "scrape through" the annual examination. To this extent and in this one-sided way the teacher was indeed compelled to recognise individual differences, but classes were so large that such recognition had to be made at the expense of the brighter children. The latter were comparatively neglected, though it might happen here and there that an exceptionally able teacher had ambitions on behalf of an exceptionally promising pupil and found means to help him. These con-

ditions of work would hardly be worth recalling now, were there not evidence that the evils of large classes and of much mass instruction have not disappeared from the schools.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF "THE CHILD"

The tendency to apply the same treatment to every pupil in a form or group, irrespectively of individual abilities and interests, has been still further emphasised by the kind of help which the psychologist has until recently offered to the teacher who sought his help. The traditional psychology aimed only at explaining the workings of "the mind," *i.e.*, of minds in general, and when the psychologist tried to help the teacher it was by means of general prescriptions applicable to "the child," *i.e.*, to children at large. "The child's" memory and imagination, for example, were described and explained as they exist in all normal children, and with little or no reference to the characteristics of any particular children or types of children. Now there is no doubt that this general psychology is very necessary, and that at its best it was, and still is, both illuminating and stimulating. Many a teacher, for instance, derived real help from such a book as William James's *Talks to Teachers*, published in 1899. The help so derived was inspirational and therefore valuable. On the whole, however, the help was indirect. It offered little direct guidance to the teacher confronted with all the problems arising out of a desire to meet the needs of individual children. It was at the back of his mind, and perhaps that was the best place for it.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF JOHN AND MARY

In recent times the fact of individual differences has come to the front as a subject of scientific investigation. In England, Francis Galton led the way during the latter part of last century. His *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, published

in 1883,¹ revealed astonishing differences, for example, in the vividness of mental imagery in persons of exceptional ability. For purposes of child-study, however, the great impulse came early in this century, when the influence of Alfred Binet, the French psychologist, began to be felt. That influence was in the direction of estimating the intelligence of individual children. It was in 1904 that an official inquiry was set on foot in Paris, with the object of devising measures for the elimination of mentally defective children from the ordinary schools. This inquiry gave Binet the opportunity of applying his principles to a practical problem, and with the help of his colleague, Simon, he produced the first intelligence scale, known as the 1905 Binet-Simon scale.² Thus began a movement which spread rapidly in Britain and like wild-fire in America, and which has not only dealt a death-blow to the easy assumption that all children of the same age are pretty much alike and respond equally to the same treatment, but has provided a practical method of differentiating definitely between individuals. For details as to the extensive development of intelligence tests the reader must have recourse to special treatises on the subject.³ It must be remembered, however, that an "intelligence quotient" gives an indication of only one aspect of personality. Other aspects, such as age and temperament, have to be taken into account in classifying children. This point will arise again in later chapters of this book.

RESPECT FOR INDIVIDUALITY

Thus one of the prevailing notes of education as conceived by the progressive teacher of to-day is an ever increasing respect for individuality. His aim is a social aim.

¹ A second and revised edition appeared in Dent's "Everyman" series.

² For a fuller account see F. S. Freeman, *Individual Differences*, pp. 12-18.

³ E.g., the *Treatises on Mental Tests* by C. Burt, P. B. Ballard, and F. N. Freeman.

He seeks to instruct and train children with a view to their future citizenship. But he believes that each child should be so instructed and trained as to enable him to make the most and best of his own abilities, and thus to make his own most effective contribution to the common weal. He believes in fact in individual instruction. So far have some teachers proceeded along this road to reform that they have tended to treat children as so many isolated units of a group, each ploughing his lonely furrow, without much regard to his neighbours. The wise teacher is well aware that though the day of mass instruction of large classes must be brought to an end, yet a place remains, and always will remain, for collective teaching. To this point we shall recur in the chapter on problems of method.

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- F. S. Freeman, *Individual Differences* (1934).
 C. M. Fleming, *Individual Work in Primary Schools* (1934).
 M. Milner, *The Human Problem*, Sec. III., Chap. I.
 S. Isaacs, *The Children We Teach*, Chap. II.

For a thorough-going American plan of "individualising" the ordinary subjects of instruction, see C. Washburne's *Adjusting the School to the Child*.

Chapter III

NORMAL EXPECTATIONS

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF JUNIORS

The prominence we have given to individual differences is in keeping with the call for reform of the traditional mass instruction, and with the needs and ideals of a modern democratic community. We have next to recognise that, since any system of education has to be organised, which means that children have to be taught in groups, there is still an important place for the study of the common characteristics which we may expect to find in children of about the same age. There is thus no inconsistency in proceeding, as we now do, to a consideration of some of the leading features of childhood, as childhood may be observed any day in a junior school, or as it may be studied in the reports of research workers. An English writer has, as we have seen, described the years here under review as the dark ages of childhood. Similarly, a well-informed American writer states that in her country little has been written about children of nine to eleven years, and that, scientifically speaking, they are truly "the Unknown Age." Probably the people who know most about them are the progressive teachers in the junior schools which have so far been established, and the observant parents of several children. Young and inexperienced teachers, and students who hope to become teachers, in junior schools would do well to observe the ways of children not only in the school, but also in the playground and the home and elsewhere as occasion offers. No book-learning on the subject of child study can take the place of original observation. On the other hand, the findings of the experts often throw invaluable light upon the results of common observation, and are

guides to the points which are best worth the attention of the untrained observer.

PHYSICAL STRENGTH

For example, many a mother of a delicate child has been comforted by the suggestion, made perhaps by friends, and perhaps by the family doctor, that, if only the child can pull through the first seven years he may still become strong. The suggestion is not based upon systematic inquiry, but upon common experience and observation. Yet that it is something more than an old wives' tale seems confirmed by expert statistical evidence. The high rates of infant mortality, even in civilised countries, are well known. Not so well known are the low rates at a later period of childhood. Writing at a time unaffected by war conditions, an Austrian investigator found, as the result of a very detailed study, that "there is no period during which the mortality rate is as low, or the resistance to disease as high, as during the tenth year."¹ In the United States, each year 60 children of each thousand under one year of age die, 5 out of each thousand between the ages of one and four years, 2 per thousand of ages five to nine years, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ per thousand between the ages of ten and fourteen.² As to England and Wales, I am able to quote a recent statement kindly sent me by the Statistical Branch of the General Register Office:—"Each year 50 children die within a year of birth out of each thousand born alive, $3\frac{1}{2}$ die out of each thousand living between the ages of one and five years, $1\frac{1}{2}$ die out of each thousand between five and ten, and 1 dies out of each thousand between ten and fifteen years. In recent years the rate of mortality has been lower at eleven and twelve than at any other age."

The American writer quoted above, who calls the period between nine and eleven the unknown age of childhood,

¹ Quoted by C. Buhler, *From Birth to Maturity* (1935), p. 144.

² F. D. Brooks, *Child Psychology* (1939), p. 481.

proceeds to a happy description of the period. "The blissful ignorance," she says, "which makes us call this the unknown age, comes from the fact that life runs along so smoothly for these children that there is little cause to study them. Their position is a little like that of the ordinary fly—pestiferous at times, readily shooed away, and not bothersome enough to make us take constructive steps to keep them under control. Toused boys dash about, hollering at the top of their lungs. Girls giggle and whisper together. Both boys and girls are annoying in their own ways as they carry on their active feud against each other and ignore the grown-ups in their environment as completely as possible. No wonder some parents dislike their offspring at this age. They are not easy to live with, but they are certainly colourful and decidedly worth studying."¹

—AND ACTIVITY

Not only is the child of junior school age usually strong and hardy. He is also well aware of the fact, and indeed is apt to boast about it and to measure his strength against that of his peers. He becomes fond of sport, of games which involve the element of competition, though the time has not yet come for athletic training with its cultivation of hardness of muscle. The enjoyment of sport undergoes a process of development during the junior school period. Up to eight or nine years it is the enjoyment of free and unrestrained movement for its own sake. In the ninth and tenth years, movements which have definite aims are preferred. In other words, the child not only wants to play games—he wants to play them well.

This impulse to incessant activity, showing itself perhaps in wild rushing round the playground, or in the sometimes trying performances of the chatterbox, is regarded by the psychologist as part of nature's plan of gradual development.

¹ Martha M. Reynolds, *Children from Seed to Saplings*, pp. 174-5. A book which does credit to the Child Study Department at Vassar College.

NORMAL EXPECTATIONS

In children, of the age in question, says one authority,¹ "neither the development of their senses nor the co-ordination of control of their muscles is yet anything like complete. The accuracy of vision, for example, is still improving all through the years from seven to eleven. Most important from the point of view of practical skill the muscle sense . . . does not reach its finest sensitivity until twelve or thirteen years. The *speed* of adjusted movements, *e.g.*, tapping or writing, shows a rapid increase from seven to ten years, after which the rate of improvement slows down. And *accuracy* of movement improves markedly from five to nine years, and then rather less rapidly up to adolescence." From all which we infer that children in the junior school, no less than those in the infant school, need abundant opportunities of bodily exercise, not only in physical training specifically so called, but in the general work of the school. Only so can the development provided for by nature get its full chance. We may add that the younger the child, the more does his school progress depend upon good health. It is not until the junior stage, about the ninth year, that he is able to succeed in school work in spite of poor health.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT : GROUP GAMES

The physical strength and incessant activity noted above finds expression in the group games which, whether in field or in playground, or failing these, in the streets, children of junior-school age can be seen to enjoy to their hearts' content. The tendency to play in groups, which began at the infant-school stage, is now in full swing. This is not to say that solitary occupations are discontinued : the boy may be still absorbed in his meccano set, and the girl in the dressing of a doll. But the typical activities of the period are exemplified in football for boys and dancing and skipping for girls. They love to play together in groups, without strict

¹ Susan Isaacs, *The Children We Teach*, p. 73.

regard for rules and regulations, and without much interest as yet in record performances. This tendency to play in groups is one aspect of a general advance in sociability. In this respect the infant-school child makes an advance upon the nursery-school child, but in junior-school children the "herd instinct" begins to assume a dominant rôle. They desire not only to play together, but to *be* together and to live their lives in the common group, whether in play or in work.

At this point the testimony of American writers is interesting, especially as regards the tendency of children at about eight to ten years old to form clubs or gangs of one sort or another, not usually of long duration. Girls' clubs are said to be common at the ages of eight to fourteen, but to be short-lived. Boys' clubs appear to be more definite in their aims and to be more lasting, the intimacy, loyalty, and solidarity of some of these groups being truly remarkable. Doing things for the good of the group, however, as in team work, is a gradual development. "Anyone organising a baseball team of ten-year-olds is not likely to have any scarcity of candidates for catching, pitching, first base, and short stop, but he will lack fielders."¹ Another writer notes that the word "gang" has an unsavoury connotation, and that boys' clubs, if substituted for boys' gangs, would meet the boys' need for adventure, and, at the same time, be a constructive influence in the children's lives.²

MENTAL ACCELERATION

The child's physical and social development during the junior school period is accompanied by a mental quickening which is equally remarkable.³ It has commonly been held that memory is now rapidly improving, but this probably means that the development of logical thought is

¹ Fowler and Brooks, *Child Psychology*, p. 377.

² Strang, *Introduction to Child Study*, p. 478.

³ Rapid mental progress is made between the second and fourth year. The rate is slower between the fourth and eighth years.

NORMAL EXPECTATIONS

slow by comparison. At the beginning of the period the child takes readily to learning facts by rote, and is not averse to mechanical iteration of verbal lore. A little later, say between nine and eleven years, there is a spurt forward in logical reasoning and critical thinking. In this connexion, therefore, a double duty lies upon the teacher of junior children. Advantage is rightly taken of the fact that at no other time in their school life can children's willingness to learn be so much relied upon. The teacher should, therefore, make sure that the elementary ground-work of speech, reading, writing, spelling, and number is made safe, so that it becomes part of the child's permanent mental store. At the same time, he will consistently take advantage of opportunities of bringing the child's growing powers of comparison and reasoning into play, so that no fact should be learned in isolation if it can be connected logically with other facts, and can therefore be more intelligently recalled at need.¹

DEVELOPMENT OF WORK-ATTITUDE

The mental quickening described above shows itself in the child's increased awareness of the difference between work and play, and his desire to work as he sees his elders do. This development of the work-attitude is one of the features of the junior school which most markedly differentiates it from the infant school. The small child's life is a life of play, and it is characteristic of play to look for immediate results, and to seek no end beyond itself. Work, on the other hand, looks for results which, though not necessarily very remote, are at any rate not immediate, and may require persistent effort from day to day for their achievement. The gradual completion of a design in accordance with the project method is a clear case in point, as may be frequently seen in a good junior school. That the line between work

¹ See Burt in *Primary School Report*, p. 263, and C. Buhler, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-9.

and play can never be a hard-and-fast line, answering to opposite definitions of work and play, is illustrated by the fact that the junior child's serious work may yield as much pleasure as if he were playing a game.¹ Later in life, he may still belong to that happy breed of men for whom work is play and play is work—the artistic fraternity. More likely, he will be one of the many who must pursue the trivial round, the common task, and for whom there is a sharper distinction between work and play. The inevitable difference between what he wants to do and what he's got to do will be emphasised after he leaves the junior school, but even there it makes its appearance.

SELF-CRITICISM

Connected with the development of the work-attitude is the child's growing tendency to criticise the results of his own efforts. A clear instance is seen in children's drawings from about three to eight years of age. The first use of paper and pencil results in aimless scribbling; next comes a stage in which they see in their oddest combinations of lines and dots, faithful representations of objects; later, more attention is given to relative positions and sizes of parts; and common objects, including human and animal forms, are treated in a less unsophisticated manner. Eventually, in most cases about eight or nine years of age, they begin to feel the inadequacy of their attempts, and are ready for the help that the teacher can give.²

It is established that what is true in the exceptionally clear case of drawing is true generally. The young child is apt to be pleased with his own performances and possessions, and critical of other people's. Self-satisfied remarks, not only about his drawings, but about his toys and books and home and relatives, are characteristic of his stage of

¹ See E. and M. Kenwick, *The Child from Five to Ten*, p. 151.

² For an exhaustive treatment see H. Eng's *Psychology of Children's Drawings*. Sully's chapter, "The Young Draughtsman," in *Studies of Childhood* may still be recommended.

development, as also are disparaging remarks about other children's. But a time comes, normally towards nine years, when he begins to see things as they really are, and when his estimates of other children's merits and deserts begin to be more impartial and objective than before. The general conclusion arrived at by investigators is that between the ages of seven and nine there is a decided drop in the percentage of children who are satisfied with their own performances and who avoid self-criticism. As might have been expected, the more intelligent the child, the more faithfully he criticises himself and his work.¹

GENERAL ABILITY AND SPECIAL TALENT

The changes described in the preceding paragraphs all contribute to the general change which takes place in children as they proceed through the junior school. The actual quality of the work done and the results achieved in any individual case must, of course, depend upon the child's natural ability. But when we speak of ability, even in ordinary conversation, we are conscious of using the word in two senses. We may refer to a person's general ability, which we may reckon as good or fair or poor; or we may refer to some special kind of ability or talent, which may be high or low or almost completely absent, such as musical or artistic or arithmetical. Most of us know people who possess a high degree of musical or other special ability, with only an ordinary degree of general intelligence. These are, and long have been, matters of common observation, but the labours of experimental psychologists have in recent years been directed towards supplementing common observation by scientific precision.

For the moment we merely accept the distinction between general ability and special talent. So far as the seven-to-elevens are concerned, a good deal of evidence has been accumulated to the effect that the quality of their work

¹ See C. Buhler, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-130 and 154-6.

depends more upon general ability than upon special talent. As a rule, special talent asserts itself later, and tells in the post-primary rather than in the primary stage. We say "as a rule," because there are notable exceptions, examples of which will be given in the chapter on the childhood of eminent persons.

The statement made above as to the later appearance of special talent seems to run counter to the well-known fact that children of junior-school age often show remarkable and even astonishing skill in drawing and colour work. Indeed a visitor to an exhibition of children's work might form the impression that, if only the children could be provided with the right kind of opportunities, this kind of skill might become almost the rule rather than the exception among adults. Upon this matter the verdict of psychological investigation is emphatic. It is found that whereas a large percentage of boys are interested in mechanical things, and many children draw and paint so well that they seem to give great promise of talent, yet as adults they prove unable to draw simple objects and to have lost all interest in mechanical activities. What seemed to be special talent is not so in reality. "Striking performance of any kind in childhood is an expression of general alertness and initiative, rather than of special talent in a given direction. The gifted eight-year-old draws because drawing is the most adequate expression for his age; at ten he will in all probability interest himself in handicrafts; during puberty he will compose music or write poetry. . . . What really happens is that a general mental activity seeks out a material that is suited to a given age-level, and does very well with it."¹ An intensive interest in drawing may mean that the child possesses exceptional talent, or that he is mentally alert and is using his power in that direction. The former is uncommon, but the latter is not.

¹ C. Buhler, *op. cit.*, p. 170. Similarly, Spearman concludes that the influence of the factor "g" on the individual's performance declines steadily from the twelfth year on, and the influence of the factor "s" increases.

NORMAL EXPECTATIONS

Of course, general ability varies greatly. In a junior school teachers may have to deal with children whose mental ages, as indicated by intelligence tests, vary from that of a dull entrant of seven or eight to that of an extremely bright child of eleven or twelve.¹

CO-EDUCATION IN THE JUNIOR SCHOOL

Thus far we have discussed children of seven to eleven or thereabouts, without much reference to the differences between boys and girls, differences which can no longer be ignored as adolescence approaches. Most of the books and reports on the education of juniors hardly mention the subject, taking it for granted that in the state-provided system it is only a matter of practical convenience whether a school is co-educational or not. Of course the whole question of co-education, and its dependence on historical antecedents and climatic conditions, is of great interest. Here we necessarily confine our view to England and Wales, not extending it even to Scotland, where the history and present status of co-education are different. Speaking for England and Wales, the Consultative Committee's Report on the primary school noted that the vast majority of departments classified as junior are organised as mixed departments. Of these mixed schools the Committee felt unable to give more than a guarded approval. They saw "no valid objection on general, sociological, and educational grounds . . . provided that due regard be paid to the differing needs of boys and girls in the matter of games and physical exercises."² They thought it most undesirable to attempt to lay down any rigid rule on the subject of co-education at this age. In populous districts, they added, separate schools for boys and girls have worked well and "have been found convenient for administrative reasons."

¹ *Handbook of Suggestions* (H.M.S.O.), p. 32.

² The Report gives scientific reasons for this important reservation (see pp. 31-2).

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Convenience for administrative reasons can hardly be called a convincing argument, and the most far-seeing of administrators would be the least inclined to urge it. The fundamental question is—which is the better arrangement for children under the age of eleven or twelve? Quite apart from firm believers in co-education at all ages, it would be easy to cite, from schools which are perfectly free to experiment, impressive evidence in favour of co-education at the pre-adolescent stage,¹ but it would not be easy to cite equally impressive evidence on the other side. Instead, therefore, of saying that there is “no valid objection on sociological and educational grounds to mixed junior schools,” the best independent witnesses say in effect that mixed schools are to be preferred.

DIFFICULT CHILDREN

There remains a question which is of general interest at all stages, but which is here considered only briefly, and with special reference to the junior stage. Everyone who has had experience in the management of children, whether in the home or at school, is well aware that some children are more difficult to manage than others. The difficulty may take various forms, of which obstinacy, defiance of authority, and angry outbursts are common examples. In these days the puzzled parent or teacher may have the opportunity of seeking help and advice at a child guidance clinic. In an important respect the experience of the clinic confirms the opinions expressed by most people who have much contact with children of different ages. It is found that a child of three may at times be extremely difficult to manage, and that the same child two or three years later has, for no apparent reason, become much more tractable. Furthermore, the statistical evidence furnished by certain child guidance clinics show that cases of obstinacy and defiance are common among children of nursery-school age,

¹ See, for example, *The Modern Schools Handbook*, Part IV.

whereas among children from eight to eleven or twelve the percentage of difficult cases is lowest. It may be added that another increase takes place with the on-coming of adolescence, and that it culminates between the fourteenth and sixteenth years, as many an inexperienced teacher in a secondary school has found to his or her discomfiture. Our immediate concern, however, is with the little folk in the junior school—for the most part gay and happy, and free as yet from embarrassing self-consciousness.

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Chapter IV

CURRICULA

THE CLASS GROUP

The object of the preceding chapter was to exemplify the kind of help which modern child-study has to offer towards a better understanding of children of junior school age. A group of such children, say about thirty, will probably include a few clever ones at one end and a few slow-coaches at the other. In any case, though each child has his own individual qualities, the group taken as a whole will present broadly common features. They are lusty and vigorous. They want to be doing something, and if the doing should take the form of making something, so much the better. Moreover, they are endlessly inquisitive. With the dawn of adolescence they will be even more self-conscious and less disposed to "give themselves away," but at the junior stage their questions are so *naïve* and incessant as to become tiresome, except to those who understand and love them—and even these need at intervals to be relieved of their presence.

A GLANCE BACKWARDS

Such being the general situation, how stands it with the teacher in charge of the group, one of whose duties it is to provide appropriate mental fare? In former times the teacher in the elementary school had not much choice in the matter. The authorities decided what the children ought to learn, and to know by the time they left school,¹ and proceeded to arrange it in slices corresponding with the years of school life. Thus the mental fare for children of nine or

¹ In so far as the common entrance examination operated, the same principle prevailed in the preparatory schools attended by children of the well-to-do classes.

ten in the old "Standard III" might very well be represented by a row of little books—two or three reading books containing extracts in prose and verse, a copy-book for writing, a book of sums including the simple rules and the compound rules for money only, a drawing-book for free-hand copies, a summary of the geography of England consisting chiefly of names of places, and so on. The row of little books was the direct outcome of the views of the authorities as to the matter to be taught. Of the child to be taught they took less cognisance. To take account of him was the teacher's affair. It was for the teacher to temper the wind to the shorn lamb. The authorities were content to set the wind blowing.

THE VERBALISM OF FORMER DAYS

A fundamental defect of the scheme was its tendency to rest satisfied with mere words, and to make the instruction mostly a matter of books and papers. This is not to say that words are unimportant. On the contrary, training in the use of words is of outstanding importance at every stage of a child's education. The mischief arises when the repetition of words is mistaken for the acquirement of clear ideas, gained through a healthy child's inquisitiveness and his desire to be up and doing. The repetition of arithmetical tables, of the names of capes and bays, of ill-understood verses, of spelling lists, of events and dates, and of religious formularies, may proceed far without adding to the child's real knowledge. This is the evil combated by the oft-repeated declaration that the curriculum of the junior school should be thought of "in terms of activity and experience, rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored."¹ This statement should not be taken as decrying knowledge, but as a warning against knowledge which is falsely so-called—against words without meaning,

¹ *Report on the Primary School*, p. 93.

against sound without sense, against mere verbal repetition, against "psittacism" in its manifold varieties.

THE BETTER WAY

The normal child hungers for knowledge and thirsts for facts, provided they arise out of his own activities and experience. The headmaster of a senior school is reported to have said that he didn't mind what the junior entrants knew, so long as they were mentally alert. It is to be doubted whether he or his assistants would have defended this opinion in any strict sense. Mental alertness is, of course, the great thing. "Not the stuffed mind, but the inquiring mind is the ideal."¹ But to reach its highest value mental alertness must be practised upon worthy and not upon worthless material. Otherwise we are back with Jeremy Bentham who thought that, provided it affords an equal amount of pleasure, pushpin is as good as poetry.

To take another instance, the following statement by a distinguished scholar of great experience in public-school education may be quoted:—"The average small boy does not care greatly what he learns: he is more docile than he is ever going to be again, and if his masters are determined that something *must* be learnt, learnt it will be."² This statement, made about boys of preparatory-school age, is of wide applicability. Indeed, the whole history of English elementary education during the nineteenth century shows that the statement is true. But it shows also that the doctrine is a dangerous one to preach. The children may have been willing to learn, but the evidence of adult students goes to show that what they are apt to learn they are also apt to forget, unless it is put to some practical use. The docility of the small boy—which, however, is by no means universal—imposes upon his teachers the obligation to see that what he is required to learn is worth learning and worth remember-

¹ A saying due to Bishop Creighton.

² C. A. Alington, *Things New and Old*, p. 14.

ing. If the teacher decides that the boy *must* learn the multiplication table by heart, and *must* learn to spell common words correctly, then as a rule learnt they will be, whether the boy sees any sense in them or not—and remembered they very likely will be, because he is frequently putting them to use. Yet it remains true that for the most part the curriculum of a junior school is more safely thought of in terms of activity and experience than in terms of an accumulated store of factual knowledge.

Never has this antithesis been more forcefully expressed than by Rousseau when he said to the orthodox teacher—the difference between the knowledge of your pupils and the ignorance of my pupil is, that your pupils learn maps, but mine makes them. Neither the orthodox teacher nor the would-be reformer was in any doubt about the value of knowing maps, but to the reformer there was all the difference between passively learning them and actively making them.

The key to the problem of curriculum lies just there. In educational controversies there always has been, and there still is, a misunderstanding and a struggle between people who know children, as Rousseau did, and people who, whilst possessing other knowledge, sometimes in an eminent degree, appear to have forgotten all they ever knew about children. Even as these words are being penned, letters are appearing in a leading newspaper contending that no boy or girl should leave school without some knowledge of astronomy, geology, biology, physiology, archaeology, and anthropology. Awhile ago similar letters were appearing about the teaching of languages. It is not too much to say that opinions of writers who, however learned, have no first-hand acquaintance with the schools and the children, are not worth the paper they are printed on. Such writers assume that people never forget what they learnt at school, and that they cease to learn when they leave school. On the contrary, what is learnt at school is quickly for-

gotten, unless it is used for some practical purpose, and people are as a rule ready to go on learning, say a craft or a language, or even a branch of science, if again they need it for some practical purpose, whether of work or of leisure.

THE CONTENT OF THE CURRICULUM

Returning to our main theme, the curriculum of the junior school, we see good reason to agree that it should be conceived in terms of activity and experience, rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored. We agree, too, that the ideal to be aimed at is not the stuffed mind, but the inquiring mind. But dangers lurk even in the best of slogans, and the danger here is lest it should be regarded as of slight importance what a child learns at the junior stage, so long as he is kept busy and happy. The truth is that the actual content of the curriculum needs careful consideration at all stages.

The bad old times of fixed curricula and annual examinations in the elementary schools came to an end many years ago. There followed a period during which a number of alternative courses, meant for schools of varying sizes and environments, were suggested, but not prescribed. Then came the famous Code of 1904 which, so far as the central authority was concerned, swept away every vestige of prescription and even of suggestion, except in the most general terms. The head-teachers of elementary schools, under their new masters, the local education authorities, were left free to devise curricula in accordance with the particular needs and circumstances of the school. We are officially assured, however, that though revolutionary changes were thus made theoretically possible, yet the sort of curriculum previously imposed upon the schools is not yet a thing of the past.¹

¹ See *Handbook of Suggestions* (Board of Education), p. 31.

“SUBJECTS”

In so far as this statement is accurate, the teacher still thinks of the curriculum as a list of “subjects,” a word which has much to answer for. The syllabuses of these subjects, say for children of nine years in Standard III, probably do not differ much from those in use a generation earlier, as described a few pages back. Apart from religious instruction, the three R’s stand first and foremost, writing taking the form of simple composition with attention to spelling. Then may be added some geography, history from an easy reading book, and elementary science or object lessons. The remaining subjects would include drawing, handwork, singing, and physical exercises. Some persons may think the list imposing, others may think it absurd. The teachers in question think it neither the one nor the other. They accept tradition and ask no questions. At the other extreme there is the progressive teacher who is aiming at nothing very definite, but is on the way and travelling fast.

Leaving aside the extremists, we observe that the teacher who feels the need of a definite list of subjects, or rather of occupations, is not on that account to be regarded as a back number, provided the occupations are so pursued that the pupil is treated as essentially active and inquisitive, and not as a semi-animated sponge. On this understanding, and remembering that the terminology of the school time-table may differ from that which is here adopted, what, we may ask, should a child of average ability be expected to possess by way of attainments at the end of the junior school period? At the moment we may leave out of view both the exceptionally gifted and the definitely backward.

READING

In the course of the nineteenth century, for reasons which need not detain us, popular education became identified

chiefly with learning to read and write and cipher. First and foremost was the requirement that every child must learn to read, which he did by first learning the alphabet and then proceeding to his primer. This requirement, or at least the way of meeting it, was plainly at variance with the child's essentially active nature, whose most effective way of learning is to learn by doing, and so school often became a place of penance from which he gladly escaped when the hour struck. For many children the process of learning to read was dull and difficult, even though the asperities of the old-fashioned method of "hammering it in" were softened by other methods, such as the phonetic and the sentence methods. Some of the still newer methods are cleverly conceived and rather highly elaborated, and yet for many children they miss the mark.

The most unfortunate cases are those children of seven or eight years who have made only slight progress and seem on the way to being incapable of much further improvement. This disability is said to pursue them not only in the junior but also in the senior school, with lamentable results. From our present point of view the important fact is that large numbers of children leave the infant for the junior school, who are supposed to have learned to read, who have not learned, and who have not the slightest desire to learn. Is this grim problem for the junior school permanent and inevitable? There is good reason to believe that it is not so, and that nearly all children who do not fall into the category of the feeble-minded can reach a fair standard at seven or eight years of age. The root of the trouble lies in the common treatment of reading as a separate "subject," unconnected with the child's natural and spontaneous activities; and this is likely to happen when the morning is devoted to the three R's and the afternoon to an activity programme. Under this arrangement the child is left with no motive for reading, except that it has to be done as a task. If, however, a shop or a post-office or a railway station is being

constructed and used, there comes a point at which reading and writing and drawing in their simplest forms are seen to be necessary, so that the children are not only willing but eager to learn. By such a method the great majority of children who are not abnormally dull may have their interest enlisted and quickened.¹

It has been necessary to discuss thus far a problem of the infant school, because of the considerable proportion of children who still enter the junior school quite unable to read, and because in any case there will always be a small proportion of late developers.

LITERATURE

The further and the characteristic problem for the junior school is that of cultivating in a child the habit of reading intelligently what he wants to read. What he wants to read will be determined partly by his experiences in the home and in the streets—an extremely variable factor, but partly also by the guidance and inspiration he receives at school and perhaps at the public library. Here, in the terminology of the usual list of “subjects,” reading merges into literature, which will include stories and verses suitable to the child’s growing range of experience as he proceeds from the infant-school to the post-primary stage. In this connexion a caution is necessary. George Herbert’s saying, “Who aimeth at the sky shoots higher much than he that means a tree,” must not be applied to the extent that the literature provided for the child shoots clean over his head. The purely literary test will never do. Of course, many of the books which children learn to love are acknowledged classics. To go no further, the names of Kipling, Barrie, Stevenson, and Defoe at once suggest themselves. Never mind, however, if the same can hardly be said of *Black Beauty*, *Little Women*, *Jo’s Boys*, *What Katy Did*, and a multitude of others—for at the child’s stage they are great

¹ On this subject see in particular Miss F. Roe’s *Fundamental Reading*.

literature. And even if by reason of his environment his taste rises no higher than the cheap magazine and the "blood," the teacher should not be dismayed, but should accept the acquired taste for reading as a necessary condition of advance to better things.¹ A school library of selected books is of course an enormous advantage. When a public library is available, with a section devoted to suitable books for juniors, the children should receive a little training on the spot in the proper use of the library. This is already being done in some towns.

WRITING

The child's first efforts at writing, made in the infant school as exemplified above, will generally shape themselves into a definite "hand." We do not propose to join here in the battle of the styles, except to say that no style can be right unless it is consistent with a posture favourable to healthy bodily growth. Most schools may continue to have a preferred style, based perhaps upon a certain set of printed copy-books, but the time has gone by when a schoolmaster was proud to proclaim that boys from his school might be recognised by their handwriting. Strict uniformity would now give place to individual diversity—each child being allowed, within limits, to develop his own style. Beyond this, the junior school should aim at training the child to write easily and legibly, and with increasing regard for what has come to be known as correct spelling, deviation from which is commonly held to be a sign of illiteracy.

COMPOSITION

Just as reading merges into literature, so writing should merge into written composition, usually in prose, but if

¹ See E. B. Warr's *New Era in the Junior School* for a list of "Favourite Books chosen by Junior Children." A. J. Jenkinson's, *What Do Boys and Girls Read?* refers to post-primary pupils, but the junior-school teacher should consult it and catch its spirit.

sometimes in verse so much the better. Here it may be observed that premature insistence on correct spelling certainly cramps the style of the young writer. A flood of ill-spelt chatter may be far more promising for the future than prim and restrained accuracy.¹ The same line of remark applies to faulty grammar. At the same time, although formal grammar may not be taught throughout a junior school, there is good reason for informal instruction as occasion arises, and there is also good reason for the formal instruction of selected individual children. It is a mistake to suppose that all children of nine to eleven are bored by grammar.

What the child writes about should be that which arises out of his actual experience, awaiting and perhaps struggling for spontaneous expression. It should be the precise opposite of the traditional short essay on a prescribed subject—a practice which originated in, and has to some extent been maintained by, an examination system which is not likely to continue to dominate the methods employed in the schoolroom.

SPEAKING

So much for the "mighty arts" of reading and writing. But it is now time to remind ourselves that these arts are not the fundamental thing in training the child in the use of the mother-tongue. The very expression mother-tongue reminds us that speaking is fundamental, that men used their tongues before they began to use their pens. In this matter nature provides the teacher with a powerful means of nurture. At the junior stage, children are less shy than they will ever be again. Many of them, with the least encouragement, are found brimming over with readiness to stand up and make a connected statement or relate an incident in narrative form, and most of those who are not

¹ For examples of junior children's spontaneous self-expression in writing and drawing, see the first part of *First Fruits*, ed. by N. Morris.

so ready may be trained to lose some of their shyness. Here we have the surest foundation of what is known as written composition. Clearness of utterance must be an important aim, and common grammatical errors may be quietly but not too insistently corrected, but to worry overmuch about dialectical words and phrases is the same kind of mistake as worrying about bad spelling in an otherwise good written composition. It is enough that a gradual approach is being made towards drawing a distinction between dialectical and what is known as standard English.¹

The unfortunate fact that the spoken language, the natural and necessary foundation, is deplorably ignored and neglected in the "English" courses in secondary schools and universities, makes it all the more important that it should be regarded as fundamental at the infant and junior-school stages. For the young child language training must be training in the spoken language. "Tongue must be related to mind."

ARITHMETIC

In the elementary schools of the past the three R's occupied a position of overwhelming importance. In particular, the part played by arithmetic was, from our present point of view, considerably overdone. Complicated sums, defended on the ground that even if they were useless, they provided good mental discipline, occupied what we now see to have been a disproportionate share of the available time of the children who were able to do them. Like buttercups in a garden, these difficult sums looked well enough, but tended to become noxious weeds. The junior school of the present day, basing itself on the concrete number work done in the infant school before the age of seven, should aim at making sure of certain minimum essentials, and should refrain from going far beyond them. Much trouble will be avoided later on if the memory-work

¹ See *Report on the Primary School*, esp. pp. 156-7.

of arithmetic, including the multiplication tables, is thoroughly done at this stage. Certainly the tables should first be intelligently built up: thereafter, the motto, "fast bind, safe find," is a good one for the junior school. The child in a post-primary school who is never sure whether seven eights make fifty-six or sixty-three should be an uncommon specimen. The arithmetic of the junior school ought to include a good deal of simple geometry, so that mathematics is really a more appropriate name for the course than arithmetic. That one word of Greek origin sounds more pretentious than the other is partly due to a somewhat fanatical exclusion of all geometry except that of the rectangle, which is taught because one cannot explain square measure without it. There seems no good reason why an ordinary child in a junior school should remain in ignorance of the simpler properties of the circle, nor why he should not know what is meant by an angle of sixty degrees. If we continue to speak of three R's, we should interpret them as two R's and an M.

Our brief survey of the three R's, regarded as parts of the curriculum of a junior school, is now complete. We have viewed them chiefly as a necessary equipment of every citizen of a civilised state, for the purpose of carrying on his economic, social, and political life, whether he be rich or poor. Not only so, however, but the three R's are also to be regarded as instrumental or tool subjects, necessary for making advances without limit in the various departments of one's mental life, both in work and in leisure. Various series of modern text-books of arithmetic for children are at the teacher's disposal, but they should be strictly regarded as his servants, not his masters.

PRACTICAL SUBJECTS

We now come to a group of occupations which, on account of their essentially practical nature, are not so liable as others to be ruined by verbalism, and which, under any

plan of intelligent teaching, ought to go straight to the hearts of normal children of junior-school age and to secure their lively co-operation. Art and handwork, music and physical training are the occupations here referred to. Few teachers in junior schools are likely to feel equally competent in all these matters, and the help of specialists may not be available. All the more desirable is it that the influence of a teacher specially qualified in one direction should be felt throughout the school. For everyone concerned, however, carefully considered and clearly defined aims are the one thing needful.

1. *Music*

As to music, the nineteenth century witnessed the rapid spread and universal adoption of the tonic sol-fa system in elementary schools. It formed an easy introduction to sight-singing, it led to creditable choral work, and in some respects, such as the use of the modulator, it remains of permanent value as a teaching aid. It was no introduction, however, to a musical education even of elementary scope. An early combination with the staff notation is now rightly regarded as essential. Furthermore, the exclusive use of the sol-fa system led naturally to a preference for songs within the range of the children's power to sing at sight. Hence, the jejune school music of last century, words and music mostly manufactured for the purpose. Hence also the comparative neglect of our fine heritage of national and folk songs, which must be taught by ear until the children can read them without difficulty. "Every child should be steeped in the strong British idiom and musical flavour of these songs. Nothing can form a sounder foundation for a musical education."¹ A recent official report goes further, pointing out the importance of a broad training in music at the primary stage for all children, and of special training

¹ *Report on the Primary School* (H.M.S.O.), p. 187. See also for detailed suggestions the *Handbook of Suggestions*, Chap. VI.

for gifted children, "since the foundation of executive skill can be laid in children with unique ease and certainty."¹

2. *Art and Handwork*

Art and handwork in the elementary schools of last century were in no better case than music. So far as they were taught at all, art meant in the main copying printed outlines of design, or perhaps (bringing a little joy to the child) outlines of animal and human forms; and handwork meant copying "models" provided by the teacher for the purpose of yielding practice in the use of wood-working tools. The courses, though better than nothing, were formal and dull. The jolly little artist who wanted to draw cats and dogs, bears and monkeys, did so surreptitiously, hiding his efforts under the desk, and the boy who wanted not merely to handle tools, but to do and especially to make things with them, might get his chance at home, but not at school. All this is now changing, or tending to change, where the necessary space and equipment exist. Progressive teachers are no longer slaves to the old dogma of formal training, because they believe in realities. Nowhere can I find this better expressed than by a writer who adds to the broad outlook three years of experimental work in a junior department. "The school," he writes, "should be so equipped that a boy or girl may learn to handle the simpler tools, commonly used in a civilised society—hammer, saw, file, screwdriver; spade, fork, hoe; sewing and knitting needles; scissors, penknife, pen, pencil and paint-brush, typewriter, telephone, wireless receiver, and so on. There should be equipment for rough experimenting in wood-work, metal-work, clay-modelling, lino-cutting, drawing, stencilling, sculpturing, printing—and for a large variety of simple mechanical and scientific work. These types of

¹ Report of M'Nair Committee on Teachers and Youth Leaders (1944), p. 155.

equipment provide for the learning of the basic skills of civilisation, most of which children are at present left to 'pick up.' No one needs to be told how badly most of us drive in a nail or handle a screwdriver—how helpless many women are when asked to look up a train, and how equally helpless most men are when left to make a bed, cook a meal, pack a trunk, or lay a fire. All such skills should be so thoroughly learned in childhood as to become automatic—the time to learn most of them is during the years of pre-adolescence, when repetition is a delight and humdrum tasks are mentally satisfying.”¹

3. *Physical Training*

As to physical training, which is here meant to include health education, the official publications are at the service of teachers and others and are exceptionally thorough and helpful.² Only the general situation calls for comment in this place. After what was said in Chapter III about the characteristics of the seven-to-eleven stage, there is no need to emphasise the zest with which juniors will as a rule join in traditional games. In physical culture these games well played are as basic as traditional songs well sung in musical culture. To games then will be added dancing and swimming. Formal exercises, essentially corrective in purpose, will also be enjoyed if not too much relied upon. Their value and use in individual cases should be carefully studied by at least one member of a school staff, when there is no specialist available.

What may be called in a general way the art of clean living is the object of health education, and it certainly does not come by the light of nature. Even in a good home the cultivation of the daily habits of civilised life must be

¹ H. C. Dent, *A New Order in English Education*, pp. 54-5.

² *Handbook of Suggestions*, pp. 161-175; *Suggestions on Health Education and Syllabus of Physical Exercises* (H.M.S.O.).

from the first a constant care, as every good mother knows. But, as has been proved beyond peradventure during the war, the gulf between the best and the worst of homes is terrible to contemplate. I have lived in a reception area, and have seen much of the best and the worst of it. The best and second best are pleasant to recall. The worst is suggestive, in a quite literal sense, of life in a pig-sty. Incidentally, such words as impetigo and scabies have been added to the vocabularies of people who never heard of them before. Never again, however, can the general public profess ignorance of what the slums have done for a small proportion of the children of Britain.¹ The case for health education is complete, and the office of teacher in a primary school must be conceived in terms of social service.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

The remaining "subjects" traditionally included in the curriculum of the elementary schools are geography, history, and object lessons. The last of these developed, from being verbal and scrappy, into "nature-knowledge," which at its best was free from these defects. With regard to all these familiar divisions of the realm of knowledge, it may safely be said that, at the junior-school stage at least, the attitude of mind that is cultivated is far more important than the amount of knowledge that is gained. That being so, what the school should attempt to do for the child must partly be determined by what can honestly and confidently be attempted by the teacher. Here we may revert to the complaint of a learned person that his adult students knew nothing of elementary astronomy, geology, biology, physiology, archæology, and anthropology, and that their school education had therefore been a failure; and to the reply of an eminent educationist that the learned complainant,

¹ The whole sad story needed to be placed plainly on record, and this has been thoroughly done in H. C. Dent's *Education in Transition*, Chap. I.

whatever else he might know, obviously knew nothing about the schools. Both these controversialists appear to have been misled by that devastating word "subjects." A teacher who has never made a systematic study of a "subject" does not necessarily wallow in the grossest ignorance of topics arising out of that subject. If he has never studied anthropology, he may yet take an intelligent interest in backward races and our responsibilities towards them; if he has never studied biology, he may yet be keenly interested in domestic animals, and may have an amateur gardener's knowledge of plant life; if he has made no special study of geography, he may yet know the kind of geography which enables him to read a good newspaper intelligently; if he has never even seen an observatory, he may yet have some acquaintance with out-of-door astronomy and may be able to explain why a boy in New York is just getting out of bed when a boy in London has just finished morning school; and if he has never taken formal courses in physics and chemistry, he may yet have a sufficiency of *ad hoc* knowledge, by no means contemptible so far as it goes, to enable him to render first-aid in domestic difficulties about water and gas and electricity. And if the specialist should fear that this protest against the tyranny of "subjects" has begun to imply a shallow philosophy of the school curriculum, he is reminded that it is with the junior school only we are here concerned.¹

As to the actual content of courses in general knowledge one may say that the geography will either be local, helped out by excursions out-of-doors, or else will consist of illustrated travel-talks; that history will be on the story-telling level, aided by short plays for children and gradually made definite by time-charts; and that nature-knowledge will be practical, and conducted as far as possible in the open air,

¹ It is in keeping with the drift of this argument that the headmistresses of girls' high schools have always preferred for lower-form work such a qualification as the "Froebel Certificate" to a university degree of the usual type.

whether in the country or in a public park. And the junior-school teacher, knowing well the stage of mental development at which his charges have arrived, will never forget that they are just beginning the long process of trying to analyse their experience of the wonderful world into which they have been born, and that the element of romance will spontaneously assert itself, and will suggest endless associations with simple and beautiful poems.¹

It follows that no fixed or definite scheme of work can properly be laid down for the junior schools of a whole country, nor even of a whole district. No two schools are exactly alike, and even if they were so much alike in situation and surroundings as to be almost indistinguishable, the fact would remain that no two staffs are alike. The imposition of a uniform scheme, whether decreed by a central or by a local authority, means a denial of freedom in teaching. But freedom here, as always, has its limitations. It never means—go as you please and do what you like. Freedom in the choice of teaching material is quite consistent with an agreed scheme of minimum essentials, generally deemed to be necessary for taking an intelligent interest in the life of the community into which the child is born. What the minimum essentials should include must remain to some extent a matter of opinion. Should an English child learn the list of kings and queens with their dates? He might do worse.

To such an extent have we now ruled out the tyranny of the list of independent subjects, and substituted in the junior school the idea of general knowledge, that at any particular time it may be impossible to say whether the occupation in hand is English or history or geography or science or art. The abstract divisions of knowledge may be dissolved in concrete situations which have a far more real existence for the child.

¹ For the important case of rural schools, see, in particular, Burton's *Education of the Countryman*, pp. 100-1.

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N. Catty, *Learning and Teaching in the Junior School*. Deals in detail with the problems of curriculum as advocated by the *Report on the Primary School*, and based largely upon experiments actually tried out in certain schools.

Chapter V

THE EXCEPTIONALLY GIFTED

"YOU NEVER CAN TELL"

Among the suitable mottoes that might be adopted by a teacher in a junior school a place must surely be found for the saying—"You never can tell." It is generally agreed that in the junior school the time has not yet arrived, but is only approaching, for definitely sorting out the children according to their individual aptitudes and capacities. The consequence is that in a junior school the children may at any one time, even though the school be small, cover the widest ranges of taste and ability. Here we have a marked difference between the primary and the several forms of post-primary education, each of which represents a result of the sorting out. It is this difference which for some teachers constitutes a great deal of the attractiveness of the junior school. Even if we assume that the state-maintained junior schools will be and remain the schools of "the masses," who knows but that any wayside junior school may harbour a child destined to future eminence as scholar, author, statesman, artist, musician, or what not? You never can tell.¹

At this point it will be interesting, and to some extent instructive, to take a few instances of persons who achieved eminence in different ways, and to get what light we can upon their promise at the age concisely defined as seven to eleven, or more broadly as six or seven to twelve or thirteen. The field thus offered is embarrassingly wide, but it must

¹ It is true that the average intelligence quotient of the children of the prosperous classes is higher than those of the children of the poor. But the hereditary superiority of the former by no means follows. See Gray, *The Nation's Intelligence*, p. 3.

immediately be narrowed down to cases in which the period of childhood is fully described, not dismissed in a few lines. There is the further restriction that autobiographical records are naturally the most valuable, and, next to these, 'biographies in which letters and personal recollections are freely drawn upon. The names here selected are Dickens, Byron, Darwin, Tennyson, and Mozart. The choice is of course arbitrary, and may even seem capricious, but it will serve. Each of the five has a secure niche in the temple of fame many years after his death; and each of them is in his own way regarded as a genius. To this particular point we shall return presently.

DICKENS (1812-1870)

The case of Dickens is so remarkable that no one specially interested in children of junior-school age can afford to leave unread the first few chapters of Forster's *Life*—it being assumed that he is familiar with Dickens' early effort, *Sketches by Boz*, his first famous book *Pickwick Papers*, and his self-revealing masterpiece, *David Copperfield*. Both his parents were of the kind who, though quite capable of bringing children into the world, were quite incapable of bringing them up decently. They brought him into the world in 1812 at Portsea. In the winter of 1814 the family moved to London, and little Charles, not yet three years old, always remembered the journey through the snow. The next family migration was to Chatham, where he lived from 1816 to 1821, *i.e.*, between the ages of four and nine. From our present point of view this period of his life is of surpassing interest. Chatham was to him for practical purposes his native place, and though most of his life was spent in London, his books bear witness that he was no less a man of Kent. During those five years at Chatham and Rochester his father, who never gave a thought to the boy's education, delighted to show off the little fellow's gift for comic turns

to an applauding audience of uncles and aunts. As G. K. Chesterton truly remarks, almost as soon as he can toddle he steps into the glare of the footlights, and "never stepped out of it before he died."¹ It was at Chatham, too, that his mother did him the great service of teaching him to read, whilst his father, quite unconsciously, had done him what proved the marvellous service of leaving in a neglected garret a collection of dusty books. "From that blessed little room," wrote Dickens, later in life, "Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Humphrey Clinker, Tom Jones, the Vicar of Wakefield, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, and Robinson Crusoe came out a glorious host to keep me company. They kept alive my fancy, and my hope of something beyond that place and time—and they did me no harm, for whatever harm there was in some of them was not there for me. I knew nothing of it."² During his last two years at Chatham (age seven to nine) he was sent to a school kept by a Baptist minister who had the good sense to pronounce him a boy of capacity, and who, when *Pickwick* had made him famous, sent him a silver snuff-box "with an admiring inscription."

Thus far there is no reason to think of Dickens' life as other than happy, but in 1821, with the return of the family to London, there came a sudden change. There follows a sad story of no school, menial jobs in a sordid home, visits to the Marshalsea where his father was imprisoned for debt; and, far the worst of all, many months spent as a poor little drudge in a blacking warehouse. From this plight he was rescued by his father, who was not actuated, however, by anxiety for the boy, but only by a quarrel with one of the partners in the blacking concern. These months were the bitterest of Charles' memories, and the bitterness was the deeper because his mother, victim of poverty, had done her best to send him back to the hateful job. The next two or

¹ *Charles Dickens*, Chap. II.

² *Forster's Life*, Chap. I.

three years, taking him to the age of thirteen, he spent at a school in Hampstead Road. He was now happy again, for though he was badly taught, his gifts as a writer of short tales and as a manager of private theatricals were soon cordially recognised by the boys.

The case of Dickens seems to suggest that genius will have its way, school or no school, and that education affects its accidents rather than its essentials. But this is no argument against schools. It is still to be noted that Dickens' happiest times were those which he spent in tolerably decent schools, and that happiness is a right of childhood. His writings would have lost none of their value if some parts of them had lost a little of their gloom. The question (a speculative one) may be raised, what would have happened if Dickens had found his way to a public school and a university? Might a public school of the 1820's have taken the place of Dothebys Hall in his writings?

BYRON (1788-1824)

Of George Gordon Noel Byron, who at the age of ten became the sixth Lord Byron, it has been truly said that if ever there were a case in which hereditary influences could excuse eccentricities of character and extremes of conduct, this excuse must be pleaded for him. On both his father's and his mother's side he was descended from lawless families, the Byrons and the Gordons. He had the misfortune to be lame from his birth, a condition that clouded his whole life. His earliest childhood was spent amid scenes of poverty and domestic friction. That at the age of three he lost his father, a Captain of the Guards, known as "Mad Jack," cannot be accounted a misfortune. His mother was a hot-tempered woman, who dealt him blows and kisses with equal liberality, and called him on occasions a lame brat. It is said that instead of the torrent of words she expected in return, he would turn pale and reply with quivering

lips, "I was born so, mother." He became famous at the age of twenty-one, and by the time of his death at the early age of thirty-six, had achieved a secure place among great men of letters. His life-story reveals another aspect of his astounding precocity. At the age of seven he fell violently in love with Mary Duff, at twelve with Margaret Parker, and at fifteen with Mary Chaworth.

Between the ages of five and seven Byron received some private tuition, and learned to read, but had little companionship. From seven to ten years of age he attended Aberdeen Grammar School, where he showed marked capacity for history, literature, Latin, and, despite his lameness, for sports. From our present point of view, it is specially interesting to find that his time at this school, at what we now call the junior-school age, was regarded by him as a solid foundation, enabling him from the first to keep a hand over his talents and to turn them to a set purpose.¹ The master of the school, who recognised his exceptional gifts, describes him as "quick, passionate, venturesome, affectionate, and impressionable." Between the ages of ten and twelve he attended—now as the young Lord Byron—a preparatory school at Dulwich, the master of which, perceiving the boy's love of reading, gave him the free run of his library, with the result that Byron read a set of the *British Poets* from beginning to end more than once. Between thirteen and eighteen he was at Harrow. This he describes as the happiest period of his life.

On the whole, then, Byron's school education must be reckoned an outstanding success as a formative influence. The teachers of this erratic genius, men of good sense as well as learning, did exceedingly well by him. Though they might have been much helped by the child psychology of a later date, one is left in doubt as to whether our modern apparatus of intelligence tests would have materially helped them.

¹ E. H. Coleridge, art. Byron in Ency. Brit.

DARWIN (1809-1882)

Of Darwin's early life we are fortunate in having his own account, written by him when he was sixty-seven years of age, and meant for his children.¹ As he himself remarks, it is not carefully written, and indeed consists of a collection of jottings rather than a continuous story. Yet its informality adds in some ways to its interest. He relates that in early childhood, before he went to school, his taste for natural history, and more especially for collecting, was well developed. He adds that this taste was clearly innate, as none of his sisters and brothers possessed it. Clearly his interest in collecting was exceptionally keen, but it is established that collecting is a favourite occupation of children of eight years and beyond—what they collect, and whether they do so at all, depending much upon environment. Young Darwin collected, not only natural objects such as shells and minerals, but also artificial objects such as coins and seals.

Darwin's confession that as a little boy he was much given to inventing falsehoods for the mere sake of creating excitement, warns us to be careful how we adjudge and deal with children's lies. His father treated this tendency not by making crimes of the fibs, but by making fun of alleged discoveries which were mischievous fabrications.

At nine years he went to "Dr Butler's great school at Shrewsbury." Though the school was only a mile from his home he went as a boarder. The combination of home and school life was a fortunate arrangement, for he declares that "the school as a means of education" was to him "simply a blank." It offered only the usual classical curriculum, and he was never good at languages. He tells us he was considered by the masters and by his father as a very ordinary boy, rather below the usual standard in intellect. To his deep mortification his father, whose memory he revered, once said to him, "You care for nothing but shooting, dogs, and rat-catching, and you will be a disgrace to

¹ See *Life of Charles Darwin*, by F. Darwin, Chap. II.

yourself and all your family." His judgment on himself was that as a boy he was keen, not on what the school offered, but on what interested him. Predominant was his interest in Nature, and his strong taste even as a very young boy for long solitary walks was the beginning of his later desire to travel.

Through boyhood and youth the knowledge that his father would leave him a considerable income accounted for his time-wasting habits, especially at Cambridge. He lacked a sufficient incentive to work. The great change did not come until he was twenty-two years of age, when he accepted the offer to go without pay as naturalist on the voyage of the *Beagle*. At last Darwin's hour had struck and he entered upon the career which made him famous.

It seems obvious that on the intellectual side, Darwin's childhood and youth were mishandled in a way which would hardly be possible nowadays. He tells us that the voyage of the *Beagle* was by far the most important event in his life, and that it determined his whole career. Yet that it ever happened was due entirely to himself and to an almost ridiculously lucky chance.

TENNYSON (1809-1892)

In the case of Tennyson, we have again the advantage of his own account of his childhood, and in particular of his early efforts at verse-writing. Between the ages of seven and eleven he was a pupil at Louth Grammar School, the master of which at that time was a tempestuous flogger of the old stamp. Late in life, Tennyson said—"how I did hate that school! The only good I ever got from it was the memory of the words, 'sonus desilientis aquae,' and of an old wall covered with wild weeds opposite the school windows." There he wrote a poem, the only line of which he remembered was "While bleeding heroes lie along the shore." At about eight years he covered two sides of a

slate with blank verse in praise of flowers. Before he could read he was in the habit on a stormy day of spreading his arms to the wind and crying out, "I hear a voice that's speaking in the wind"; and the words "far, far away" always had a strange charm for him. At about ten or eleven Pope's version of Homer's *Iliad* became a favourite, and he wrote hundreds of lines in the regular Popeian metre. At about twelve he wrote an epic of about six thousand lines in the manner of Scott. Some of these efforts were preserved, and he was able to say of them in later life that they seem to have been written in perfect metre. These poems drew from his father, Dr Tennyson, rector of Somersby, the remark that "if Alfred died one of our greatest poets will have gone." There was more than pardonable pride in that judgment, for Alfred was obviously a born poet. For the early flowering of his talent he seems on the surface to have owed little or nothing to his school, though the outburst quoted above may be taken as the natural effect upon a sensitive soul of harsh discipline. But he owed more to his physical environment—to the Lincolnshire wolds over which he wandered, and to the desolate shores of the North Sea. Still more did he owe to his father, a scholar and a traveller, to whose library he had free access, and to his brothers, Frederick and Charles, who also take places of their own in the gallery of English poets.

MOZART (1756-1791)

Never was the saying that we live in deeds, not years, better exemplified than in the career of the great musician Mozart, who died at the age of thirty-five, but who had achieved fame at the infant-school or kindergarten stage of a normal child's life. In half the proverbial three score years and ten he seems to have done the work of a long life-time. Brought to the front by his father, a violinist of some distinction, the boy at the age of five performed in public in

his native city of Salzburg. At six years, and again at seven, he and his clever sister were taken by their father on prolonged musical tours in Germany and France. The boy sang, composed, played on the harpsichord, the organ, and the violin, and won admiration in the Court circles of the day, both for his wonderful musical gifts and for a simplicity of disposition quite in keeping with his tender years. In his eighth year he was brought to England, where he played with great success before the Royal family and attempted the composition of a symphony. The next year we find him in Holland, where he made his first attempt at an oratorio, and in general repeated his success in England. Beyond this point it is not necessary for our purpose to trace his upward path to a place among the immortals.

Like many others of equal fame, Mozart owed nothing to the school system of his time and place; he received his general education from his father, and, one must add, from the social surroundings to which his father was able to introduce him. In one sense Mozart's precocity was not exceptional, for nearly all great musicians have been recognised in childhood as musically gifted. The phrase musically gifted, however, conceals an ambiguity. Common observation leads one to believe that an excellent performer may be in other respects a person of ordinary ability, and this belief is borne out by investigation. The same remark cannot be made of an excellent composer. There seems no doubt that eminence in musical composition is not attained without marked intellectual capacity, whereas a great executant may be, but of course need not be, a person of average ability.

The case of Mozart as an infant prodigy has drawn forth the comment that "one dreads to think what would have been the fate of Mozart if he had lived in this Butlerian age (*i.e.*, the age of the Education Act, 1944). He would still have become a musician, but not the musician we knew." The reply seems to be that nowadays there are severe re-

strictions which guard the welfare of children taking part in stage performances.

GENIUS

Each of the five eminent persons whose childhood we have passed in review is usually accounted a genius in his own way. The word genius has no settled technical meaning. Instead, it provides a fruitful subject of comment and of entertaining aphorism. Genius, says one, is an infinite capacity for taking pains. It is nothing, says another, but labour and diligence. Such sayings obviously express only one side of the truth. Nearer the mark is the American saying that genius is one part inspiration and three parts perspiration. The life-story of a genius exhibits him as a hard worker. The inspiration must be there, but without the perspiration it would never get its chance and its very existence would remain unknown. As to the secret of the inspiration we have no certain knowledge, but many opinions. The true genius, remarked Dr Johnson, is a man of large general powers accidentally determined to some particular direction. William James adopted Bain's view that genius is the operation in an extreme degree of association by similarity, and he distinguished between those who take notice of the similarities—the philosophers and men of science, and those who simply obey them—the poets and artists.

Recent American psychologists have sought to introduce precision in this matter by boldly identifying genius with the maximum degree of intelligence indicated by intelligence quotients. They have worked out "genetic studies of genius" chiefly on the basis of intelligence test ratings. These, says a careful and candid British authority,¹ are merely "a regrettable linguistic aberration." What we mean by genius, he declares, has no necessary connexion

¹ J. L. Gray, *The Nation's Intelligence*, pp. 59-62.

at all with the concept of test-intelligence. The Binet scale, he adds, is very successful in the diagnosis of feeble-mindedness, but "neither it nor any other test helps us to prognosticate genius," the unquestionable fact being that "genius is not continuous with high intelligence." Needless to say, such critics as he are especially severe on all attempts to calculate the I.Q.'s of famous men of bygone times, such as have been made in the cases of Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, and a multitude of others.

Of the inspiration, whatever its secret may be, we may safely say with Galton that it is inborn. When—to take a common example—the principal of a school of art is called upon to advise as to the future of a pupil, what he has to ascertain is whether that pupil has "got something which cannot be taught," and, if so, in what degree. May we not say that the genius, the boy or girl who will bear a famous name a century later, is he or she who possesses in an altogether superlative degree mental qualities which cannot be taught?

OTHER INSTANCES

According to his tastes and interests, the reader may be inclined to choose other famous persons about whom the records are sufficient, and to picture them as they were between the period of early childhood and adolescence—the seven-to-eleven period. Take a few instances, again at random. There is the extraordinary case of Ellen Terry who says—"I had never had the advantage—I assume that it is an advantage—of a single day's schooling in a *real school*. What I have learned outside my own profession I have learned from my environment." Remarkable also is the case of Cardinal Newman, who spent the years between seven and fifteen at a private school, whence he proceeded straight to Oxford. During his school years he scarcely ever took part in a game. His character, however, made itself felt, and he was often chosen by the boys as arbitrator

in their disputes. He wrote both prose and verse with great promise at the age of eleven. Then there is the melancholy case of Anthony Trollope, who spent the years from seven to ten as a day-boarder at Harrow, at a time when his home circumstances were most unfavourable. "No doubt," he says, "my appearance was against me. I remember well when I was still the junior boy in the school, Dr Butler, the headmaster, stopping me in the street, and asking me, with all the clouds of Jove upon his brow and all the thunder in his voice, whether it was possible that Harrow School was disgraced by so disreputably dirty a little boy as I? Oh, what I felt at that moment! But I could not look my feelings. I do not doubt that I was dirty—but I think that he was cruel. He must have known me had he seen me as he was wont to see me, for he was in the habit of flogging me constantly. Perhaps he did not recognise me by my face." To conclude this brief miscellany of interesting cases, there is a special fitness in mentioning that of Augustus de Morgan¹ (father of William de Morgan), distinguished in his time as mathematician and logician, and also, on the emphatic testimony of his students, as a teacher. Perhaps he would have been still more eminent, but for his astonishing versatility, as to which, however, it may safely be said that he touched no subject upon which he did not cast new light. Between seven and sixteen he was taught by a succession of able men, ministers and clergymen, ending with one whose strength lay in classics and mathematics. The remarkable thing in his case is that the germ of his mathematical talent was not discovered until he was about fourteen to fifteen years of age. Until then it lay in him, so to speak, unsuspected. This could hardly have happened to a child of similar gifts born a century later. It might have been all the better for him and his influence on others if a mental test had revealed his capacities at an earlier date.

¹ 1806–1871.

THE INTELLECTUALS

The inherent interest of the subject, and the accessibility of information thereon, has led us into some detail about the childhood of persons destined to become famous. Of such cases, any school for children of seven to eleven may harbour a few, or none. Chiefly, however, we have here to reckon with the ten or twelve per cent. whose I.Q.'s are upwards of 115, and who should find their way to a secondary education of the grammar-school kind. Of these almost any junior school, of whatever size and wherever situated, is pretty sure to include specimens. They are of the type which may fitly be called, provided no snobbishness is implied, the intellectuals. Their abilities are of the kind which enables them to profit by an education given very largely through the medium of words—as most education has been in times gone by. Even when the interests of the pupil lean to the scientific rather than to the literary side, books play an indisputable part in his educational equipment, for equally with his more literary companions he is a thinker, possibly doing some of his best work with folded arms and closed eyes. He belongs to the type which, until recent years, has never been provided with suitable opportunities, unless enjoying the opportunities provided by a preparatory school leading to a public school.

Whether a child in a junior school belongs to this type or not cannot safely be predicted, and the notion that a child's scholastic future can be fixed at the age of ten or eleven has no psychological warrant, and has indeed nothing but administrative convenience to recommend it. The presence of unusually bright children, now revealed or rather perhaps confirmed by means of intelligence tests, has always been very well known to the discerning teacher. Anyone who has clear recollections of English elementary schools during the past sixty or seventy years can think of many cases in which the child of promise has been recognised by his teacher as such. What opportunities were

provided for him depended entirely upon the teacher, who had not the least encouragement from the authorities, but who often nevertheless rose to the occasion. Working under a system which was devised for children in the lump and which ignored individuality, he quietly found means to "bring on" promising pupils, instead of leaving them to dawdle through the school year and complete it by passing an absurdly monotonous annual examination. His modern successor is in happier case, for he is now officially informed that "the bright child as well as the dull child needs some special provision; otherwise, not only his mental but his moral development also may be hindered, for he may have few chances within the limits of the junior school of learning to attack and to persevere with a task worthy of his capacity, or of experiencing the stimulus and the joy of achievement arising from thought and effort. Resourceful and intelligent teachers have shown that it is possible to provide appropriate training and work for such children without sacrificing those of average ability."¹

So far, so good. It remains to be said that for a certain type of child, limited in numbers, the curriculum of the junior school is rather too heavily weighted on the practical and æsthetic sides. A child of this type should have the opportunity in his last two years in the junior school of extending his mathematical knowledge to geometry and algebra, and of taking a systematic course in English grammar as a preparation for the linguistic side of a grammar school course. Individual work, directed and supervised by the teacher, is the obvious means of providing these opportunities.

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British writers have dealt much more extensively with the backward child than with the gifted variety.

In America, where it has become increasingly recognised

¹ *Handbook of Suggestions* (Board of Education), p. 119.

that neglect of the gifted child is one of the dangers to be guarded against in a democratic community, considerable attention has been given to the problem. The following are among the many references which might be cited :—

Leta S. Hollingworth, *Gifted Children*.

J. E. Bentley, *Superior Children*.

H. A. Carroll, *Genius in the Making*, esp. Chap. XII.

A. O. Heck, *Education of Exceptional Children*, Chaps. XXVI to XXIX.

Chapter VI

THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED

A STATISTICAL SUMMARY

In Chapter III we considered the usual characteristics of children at the junior-school stage, and in Chapter IV the principles upon which the curricula of junior schools should be based. No reference was made to children who are handicapped, physically or mentally. It is the mentally handicapped, so far as the junior school is concerned, that we are now to discuss. We begin with a brief statistical statement, presuming that, like other similar statements, it claims to be nothing more than a rough guide. We have, then, good authority for saying that if the whole of a large population, say that of London, were to undergo certain recognised tests of intelligence, they would probably fall into a few pretty uniform grades. About two in a thousand or .2 per cent. have mental ratios or, as the Americans prefer to say, intelligence quotients (I.Q.'s) above 150. They find their way, or ought to find their way, into those professions and administrative posts which afford full scope for their abilities. About the same proportion, two in a thousand, are imbeciles or idiots, ineducable defectives best provided for in their homes or in residential institutions. About 2 per cent. have I.Q.'s above 130, and should find their way, if necessary, by means of scholarships, to a good secondary education. Balancing these at the other end of the scale, about 2 per cent., having I.Q.'s between 70 and 50, are the feeble-minded, deemed unable to profit by instruction in an ordinary school. Again, about 10 per cent., having I.Q.'s above 115, should find their way to a secondary education of the grammar school type. Balancing these in the numerical scale are another 10 per cent., having I.Q.'s

between 85 and 70, the children known as dull or backward or both. The remaining part of the population in question, constituting about 75 per cent. of the whole, have I.Q.'s in the neighbourhood of 100, ranging from 115 to 85. These are "the masses" in a special sense, the people by whom most of the hard work is done, and on the whole well done. They represent "the common man," of whom Abraham Lincoln said that God must have loved him or He wouldn't have made so many. It follows that so far as intelligence tests can be trusted, and waiving the question of their predictive value, a large junior school may have in it a few children of exceptional promise, a high proportion of sound human material of the average kind, and a group constituting the awkward squad, the backward or dull or both, and the feeble-minded. There is much to be said, however, for thinking and speaking of these children simply as handicapped, *i.e.*, as persons starting out in life at a disadvantage because of defects which may turn out not to be irremediable. In any case, when the time comes for a child to leave school and to be on the look-out for a job, he must not bear the stigma of being officially labelled as a dullard or a dolt. In terms of what the intelligence tests do test, he may be. In other respects, equally important for good citizenship, he may not be.

That the figures above cited must be taken only as general indications of what is to be expected may be illustrated by reference to another authoritative estimate, according to which, of the children eight years of age in a junior school, about 15 per cent. will have I.Q.'s between 85 and 70, and will only be able to do work which the average child of five and a half to six and three-quarter years can do without much difficulty. And if the children with I.Q.'s below 70 are also in attendance, then 3 or 4 more per cent. will be found of still lower ability, and will, for example, be unable to learn to read at the age of eight.

THE EDUCATIONALLY BACKWARD

Let us for a moment omit the latter, and concentrate upon the children described by the experimentalists as having I.Q.'s below 85 but not below 70. Whatever else may be said of them, at the age of ten they know no more of ordinary school subjects than most children know at the age of eight, and they are unable to keep pace with the latter in the "three R's." In this sense they are regarded as educationally backward. But it is most important to observe that this form of backwardness may be due to very different causes. The secret of a child's backwardness may lie in irregular attendance, a bad home, poor health, unsuspected defects of sight or hearing, and so on; and when such conditions as these have been discovered and as far as possible remedied, the backwardness may speedily disappear. On the other hand, a child who enjoys all the advantages of a good home, a good teacher, and a good doctor may still be "educationally backward," by which is really meant unable to take readily to that which is traditionally regarded as the mainstay of an elementary education, *i.e.*, the three R's. Evidently it is important that the junior school should find out whether a child's backwardness is due to causes that can be remedied, or to the peculiarities of his natural heritage.

NOT A NEW PROBLEM

Of course the problem of the educationally backward has exercised the minds of thoughtful teachers long before I.Q.'s were invented, and the history of education affords striking examples of early attempts to solve the problem. One of the most remarkable instances is that of the eminent Victorian schoolmaster, Thring of Uppingham. He held strongly that every boy could do something and do it well. He did not mean to include the feeble-minded, who could hardly have found their way to his school, but he certainly

did mean to include the type now called dull and backward. With them in view he carried his opinion boldly into practice. As in duty bound, he made classics and mathematics compulsory, and had them taught in the morning. In the afternoon a pupil might select from French, German, physical science, woodwork and metalwork, music, and fine arts. To music he attached great importance, Uppingham being one of the first schools in which it was seriously cultivated. It was also, we may add incidentally, the first English public school to provide a gymnasium and a qualified instructor. In pursuance of his conviction that every boy could do something well, he insisted upon individual attention to every boy, bright and dull alike. In fact he was a man well ahead of his time. It is reported of another and an older public school, that boys who at a certain age did not reach a certain standard in academic subjects were sent away, such boys being known in the parlance of the masters' common-room as returned empties. Thring would probably have protested that in that school a sort of emptiness existed elsewhere than in the minds of those boys.

THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

To return to our main theme, the junior school must as a rule have a proportion of dull and educationally backward children, with whom it cannot, even if it would, deal by the short and easy method of getting rid of them. The teacher may be tempted to regard them as a nuisance. He may think of the doughty deeds he would perform with pupils quick and bright without exception. If so, he cannot too often remind himself that that is not the human problem with which he is faced and with which he has undertaken to grapple. Unless he has an unduly large class—and it must be conceded at once that a mass of children can receive only a mass education—he will follow Thring's advice. He will get down to the individual child, and find out what

thing the child can do tolerably well. Making the most of that one thing is the grand secret of educating the dull child, and it is done by engendering in him a little faith in himself. The saving occupation may at first have no direct connexion with the three R's. It may even be the intelligent care of rabbits and white mice, or the playing of a flute or a fiddle.

THE THREE R'S.

Now, however, it is time to say that this plea for the cultivation of the one small talent, or more, that the individual child may be found to possess, even to the apparent neglect of the three R's, does not imply that the three R's are unimportant. Robert Lowe's famous gibe that, having conferred a popular franchise, we must proceed to educate our masters by teaching them to read, write, and cipher, was an ironical way of putting an obvious truth. It was always true that democratic government, based upon universal suffrage, requires as an imperative necessity that every citizen, unless an imbecile or an idiot, should be able to employ the extended means of communication known as reading and writing. And like so much else this truth has been thoroughly well rubbed in by the social conditions of a great war, with a vast machinery of compulsory registration, identity cards, and ration books. Though, therefore, our backward children are the awkward squad in the school-room, and may never be able to read and write and cipher well, they must be faithfully taught to do these things as well as possible. Dr Johnson, who was an authority on dictionaries, held that a bad dictionary is better than none. Similarly, we may say that to read and write badly is far better than to be unable to read and write at all. Besides, there is real substance in the view that the sense of inferiority and frustration felt by the backward child, leading often to delinquency, is lessened by "early and efficient teaching in the fundamental subjects of reading, writing, and arith-

metic.”¹ As to arithmetic, what was said in Chapter IV about eliminating complicated sums is doubly and trebly applicable to the mentally handicapped. As has been pointedly observed—“none of them will want to multiply £3 5s. 6d., 18s. 9½d. by 89 after leaving school, but most of them will require such calculations as 1s. 10½d. from 2s. 6d., or ¼ lb. at 2s. 6d. per lb.”²

A FRESH APPROACH

We now revert to an important point which we touched upon a few pages back. Nowhere has it been more clearly expressed than in the pamphlet on the Education of Backward Children, issued by the Board of Education in 1937. “It is a pity in some ways that the word intelligence has been used to describe the ability required for working the kind of tests by which I.Q.’s are evaluated. What they are intended to measure is the actual or potential power of abstract thought; they leave untouched many fields of human activity in which genuine ability may be displayed. It does not follow, for example, that a child who responds poorly to verbal tests such as Binet used will be equally backward in tests that depend upon the power to handle concrete materials, or that he will be deficient in musical or artistic ability, in bodily grace or athletic prowess, or in the social qualities that enable him to live on good terms with his fellows. Many children who have low I.Q.’s have other gifts which will enable them to go through life as independent and useful citizens, and it is extremely unsafe to label any person as generally and finally dull on the basis of a verbal intelligence test. . . . Where abstract thought is not required, he may be alert, sure, and even ingenious.”³

¹See H. R. Hamley in *Education of Backward Children* and C. L. Burt, *The Young Delinquent*, Chap. VIII.

²F. J. Schonell, *Education of Backward Children*, Chap. VI.

³The case of the apparent stupidity of the country “bumpkin” is dealt with convincingly by H. M. Burton in *The Education of the Countryman*, p. 53.

—AND AN INSTRUCTIVE EXPERIMENT

Because it is unsafe to label a child with a low I.Q. as simply backward, the precaution is adopted of calling him *educationally* backward—backward in an educational sense. Thereby hangs a tale. The qualifying word implies, what has always been assumed, that elementary education means chiefly and above all the teaching of the three R's. That is the traditional curriculum handed down to us from the nineteenth century, and based chiefly on social and political considerations. So far as children with low I.Q.'s are concerned, there is evidently a strong case for refusing to be bound any longer by the traditional curriculum, and for making a more practical and hopeful approach to the end in view. Not only so, but experiments along these lines have caused some of the bolder spirits to extend the more practical approach to the cases of children whose I.Q.'s are not low. This brings us to a consideration, necessarily brief, of the experiments carried out at Lankhills School, a "Special (M.D.) School," residential, and provided by the Hampshire Local Education Authority.

Though the account given of this school by its moving spirit is to a great extent an account of educational development in a special school, yet the author means his book to be helpful mainly to teachers in senior schools, in fact to teachers of ordinary children.¹ He recognises two broad types of ability. The first is that which enables its possessor to profit by an education given through the medium of words. A high ability of this kind "gives a highly significant correlation with success in English, it gives a significant correlation with success in arithmetic, it indicates ability to acquire learning from books." Children with low ability of this kind are those generally in the C. and D. classes in the senior schools. They are regarded as "dull," this epithet having been affixed because educational exercises in the past have been chiefly in terms of words, and because "only

¹ *The Education of the Ordinary Child*, by J. Duncan (1942).

this one aspect of intellect, one type of ability, was considered." The second of the two broad types of ability is that which enables its possessor to deal successfully with things which can be seen and handled rather than with verbal descriptions, with the concrete rather than with the abstract.

Here we may seem to be getting back to the familiar arguments in favour of handwork, and plenty of it, for the dull and backward. It keeps them busy; it keeps them happy; it is repetitive in its nature and doesn't require any brain power to speak of, and it may even lead to the production of useful articles, as when paper and cardboard work leads on to bookbinding. But though such results as these may also be achieved, they are not the direct objects of the scheme here under consideration. The purpose of that scheme, so far as handwork is involved at all, is to stimulate thought, to secure for children of moderate or low I.Q.'s the utmost intellectual activity of which they are capable in solving visual and concrete problems. A boy or girl of high I.Q. may work through a standard treatise on arithmetic, may understand it, and may solve difficult problems because of his or her ability to learn from books. A pupil of the other type would fail, perhaps miserably, in such an attempt, but if faced with things, with concrete material out of which he is to make something, the planning and measuring will be his fittest introduction to arithmetic, a subject in which he may go far or not, according to his grade of general ability. Perhaps the sum and substance of the whole scheme may be expressed by saying that only about ten per cent. of the population need to deal with abstractions. They are the people who enter the professions and who, as children, respond well to an academic type of education. For the other ninety per cent. (so runs the argument) success in life depends upon practical and not upon verbal ability. They should receive a practical education, which may in its later stages be of an advanced character,

but which will for the mentally handicapped do the best that can be done.

In this experiment, the quest for the best educational treatment of the mentally handicapped has suggested a revised conception of the educational treatment of children of ordinary intelligence. In fact, so far as the junior school is concerned, it may be regarded as one way of giving effect to the familiar injunction that the curriculum should be conceived in terms of activity and experience, rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored. That is why the principle underlying the scheme should not seem an entirely new thing to the reader of the exposition of the curriculum in Chapter IV of this book. What was said then, for example, about teaching a child to read, and the necessity of connecting such teaching with his natural and spontaneous activities, is a clear case in point.

THE QUESTION OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Returning to the main subject of this chapter, we are left with the question, how far the special educational treatment of the mentally handicapped, now definitely required by the law of the land, appears to necessitate the provision of special schools for the purpose. As regards the less serious cases, say those of children whose I.Q.'s are between 85 and 70, there is some difference of opinion, but it is widely held that they get their best chance if they are kept in the ordinary schools, and that the cleverer children will not suffer mentally, and will gain socially, provided the classes are not so large as to make individual treatment difficult or impossible.¹ As to the more serious cases of the feeble-minded children whose I.Q.'s are between 70 and 50, there is less difference of opinion. In their case there is much more to be said for a special school or department,

¹ The case against segregation, even at the post-primary stage, is put with characteristic vigour by H. C. Dent in *A New Order in English Education*, p. 57. See also F. H. Spencer's *Education for the People*, p. 85.

staffed by teachers skilled in the treatment of such cases, and regarding it as a form of social service. Such teachers will desire an ever-open door between the special school or department and the ordinary school for juniors, and will desire to transfer all hopeful cases. Fortunately for those that remain, the over-worked and misused term "M.D." disappears from the scholastic vocabulary. The safer and juster word "handicapped" takes its place.

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Chapter VII

PROBLEMS OF METHOD

MATTER AND METHOD

It is usually held that any complete account of the educational process must include a consideration of matter and of method. Of the matter to be taught, so far as children of seven to eleven are concerned, what has been said in previous chapters must suffice. To a great extent it is determined for the teacher, not by him. He cannot please himself whether he teaches the three R's and the elements of geography. He is left, however, with a great deal of freedom as to when and how he shall teach them; and so with the whole province of what is known as method. It is for this reason that most of the purely educational questions that excite the interest of teachers, causing lively discussion and sometimes driving them into opposite camps, are at bottom problems of method. It will help to emphasise certain points already mentioned if we now pass in brief review a few of the more remarkable movements and controversies of the kind that have taken place within living memory.

THE FROEBEL MOVEMENT

In doing so we shall find that though matter and method are broadly distinguishable, yet no hard and fast line can be drawn between them. This point is very well illustrated by my first example, the Froebel movement, which in England started in the late 1870's, and which, though directly affecting children of infant-school age, was by no means without influence upon the education of children of junior-school age. The main purpose of instruction in the elementary schools had always been conceived in terms of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Even the infants could

make a beginning by learning the ABC and by making strokes and pothooks. Such was the system securely fastened upon the schools by the Revised Code of 1862. Gradually its asperities were somewhat softened by the introduction of "suitable occupations" designed for the "training of hand and eye." These gentler breezes blew from the Froebel movement, which was making its way in places that were independent of the state system. Even in these places, however, the true influence of Froebel was limited and partly frustrated by a literal interpretation of his famous "gifts." American educators led the way in this mistaken literalism, but it was also an American educator, John Dewey, who led the way to the correction of the mistake, by insisting that the child's activities in school should be related to the life around him out of school. The point which here concerns us is that during nearly two generations the most progressive of infant and junior school teachers worked under the spell of a literal Froebelism, developing the "gifts and occupations" to a pitch of complexity which would make a modern young teacher gasp and stare; and that this narrow interpretation was—partly through the influence of other movements—gradually abandoned. Not only so, but in spite of these vagaries, the essential Froebel, his marvellous insight into the meaning of childhood and the philosophy of play, remains untouched and unimpaired. Not in vain had the over-zealous reformers of an outworn tradition made their mistakes. "It was," says a recent writer of high authority, "Froebel who, in the early part of last century, first pointed out that the games that children play in groups to set rules are only part, and a very small part, of the total play-life of children, and that play in itself in children is not *relaxation*, but the most significant aspect of childhood. It was Froebel's genius to have discovered play as the appropriate vehicle and help-mate of education. Primarily an educationist with his whole mind and heart centred in education, he was at the same

time an amazingly intuitive, acute, and sympathetic observer of children."¹

HERBART

Of our next example it is not possible to speak so cheerfully. In the 1890's the really progressive teachers, at any rate of children beyond the infant and kindergarten stage, were those who enlisted under the banner of the German philosopher, Herbart, who, like Kant before him, took pedagogy under his wing. Unlike Kant, however, Herbart exercised his greatest influence through his theory of education, which extended to many of the details of a teacher's occupation as he conceived it. Herbartianism found its way into England, chiefly through American channels, at a time when many English-speaking teachers undertook a pilgrimage to Jena, to sit at the feet of Wm. Rein, reviser and developer of Herbart's ideas. The two chief items that emerged were the principle of the correlation of subjects and the doctrine of the formal steps of instruction. In course of time it became apparent that this correlation merely meant making artificial connexions between subjects which had been artificially kept in closed compartments. It attacked the traditional error of lists of independent subjects, but, as we saw in Chapter IV, it began at the wrong end. Instead of beginning with a list of subjects to be correlated it should have begun with the undifferentiated whole out of which subjects gradually emerge. So the zeal for correlation faded out. The formal steps of instruction had a longer lease of life, because they did at any rate provide a sort of psychological basis for a collective lesson. In particular, they provided that the teacher should begin well by gathering from the children what they already knew about the subject. Thereafter, however, it was the teacher who "presented" the material and did most of the work. Still,

¹ So M. Lowenfeld in her learned and exhaustive work, *Play in Childhood*, pp. 30-1. See also Nunn's chapter on Play in his *Education, its Data and First Principles*.

as an attempt at scientific method the scheme commended itself in training colleges, and professors of education vied with one another in explaining, adapting, and improving it. The fatal flaw in the scheme was that it took no account of individual children. It pre-supposed large classes of children sitting in serried rows and hanging on the teacher's lips. The collective lesson has its uses, but the principle and practice of individual work have dethroned it from its old position. The Herbartian system, once acclaimed by most progressive teachers, has passed into history—not, however, without leaving useful traces behind. That seems to be the best that can be said of it.

THE MONTESSORI METHOD

Later on, in the early part of the present century, a remarkable stir was created among teachers of the younger children in English-speaking countries by the writings and labours of the Italian educator, Maria Montessori. Again a new educational gospel reached Britain chiefly by way of America, and especially through the efforts of Dorothy Canfield Fisher. As regards the younger children, the leaders of progressive thought and practice in England were soon divided into two opposing camps, the Froebelians and the Montessorians. There were many differences between the two systems, but there was one outstanding difference which explains much of the excitement. A good kindergarten necessitated small classes, and was therefore relatively expensive. The Froebelians had always joined heartily in protests against the large classes in the elementary schools, because it was only in a very limited degree that the spirit of the kindergarten could permeate such classes, even when the teacher herself was imbued with that spirit. On the other hand the Montessorians made no fuss about moderately large classes, because in their view the true educational unit was not the class at all, but the individual child. Each child was occupied in working through the self-correcting

apparatus, under the eye of the adult-in-charge, who was a superintendent or directress rather than a teacher in the ordinarily accepted sense of the term. The apparatus was the silent teacher, provided it was used as it was meant to be used. The natural child might want to play with it in his own way, in which case its educational value, as conceived by its scientific inventor, would be ruined. A system which thus placed itself in conflict with the child's instinctive tendencies could not as a system succeed. So far the Froebeli-ans were right. They held that when young women received short courses of training in the use of the apparatus, and then blossomed forth into Montessori teachers, the apparatus assumed the aspect of a patent medicine, and the procedure savoured of quackery. Nevertheless, the Montessori method has influenced for good the teaching in all progressive schools for the younger children, because in it the principle of respect for individuality, and the practice of individual work, are fundamental. In its details as a system it has died out. Nevertheless, the Montessori method has stimulated educational thought and practice in the direction most needed.

THE DALTON PLAN

From the beginning of the century, then, educational progress has largely meant taking into full account the fact made clearer, and more precisely defined, than ever before, that though all normal children are alike, yet they are all different. The ignoring of individual differences has not been confined to schools, but stares one in the face in whatever direction one looks in the field of education—witness, for example, the lecture system as contrasted with the tutorial system in universities. Similar to the influence of the Montessori method upon the education of younger children, so far as care for the individual is concerned, has been that of the Dalton plan in the education of older pupils. This is not the place for a full description of the

plan ; suffice it to say that it removes from the teacher's shoulders the responsibility for getting the necessary work done, and places that responsibility upon the pupil, who proceeds at his own pace towards the completion of an "assignment." The teacher superintends and advises, and the classroom assumes the aspect of a subject-laboratory. The critics of the plan hold that it places too much responsibility upon the children, that the reliance it places upon the available text-books is not justified, and that a smaller place is left for the old collective or class teaching than it deserves. Though, therefore, the Dalton plan has directly or indirectly left its marks upon the most progressive schools, it might be difficult to find any school in which the plan is practised thoroughly. Especially is this true of schools for children at the junior stage. It is true also of schools for children who are the reverse of bright. In each case the reason is that the weight of responsibility is too heavy. Even with these children, however, the principle of the Dalton plan operates when cards indicating assignments of work are handed out, to be completed in one lesson or more.¹ This practice is reminiscent of the arithmetic and other cards commonly used in the elementary schools of the 1880's.

THE PROJECT METHOD

More direct in its influence upon the progressive junior school, though in principle by no means restricted thereto, is the so-called project method. By its originators and their followers it is designed to counteract the defects of the traditional classroom instruction, with rows of children seated in desks, and a time-table providing for lessons in the three R's and a variety of other subjects. These subjects are all abstractions from real life, whereas the idea of the project is to introduce into the school a representation of a bit of real life as experienced by the children—a shop, or a post-

¹ See Duncan, *Education of the Ordinary Child*, pp. 31-2.

office, or a farm, or a street, and to make it the means by which not only hand-work, but reading, writing, spelling, and perhaps geography and other matters will naturally and inevitably arise. In this way, it is held, lessons learned and tasks executed at the bidding of the teacher are replaced by activities that have a meaning and a purpose into which the child himself fully enters. Purposeful and whole-hearted activity on his part is the very essence of the method ; and indeed a visit to a junior school in which a project is being carried out intelligently, and under reasonably suitable conditions, is enough to convince most people that this break with the old classroom routine is a healthy sign. Unfortunately for the effective extension of the method, even the most enthusiastic of teachers are in many of the schools unable to put it into practice, because of the size of classes and the exiguity of space. Assuming, however, that these evils will gradually be reduced, it seems likely that in a good junior school a "project" will occupy part of the working day, the other part being still devoted to regular instruction in "subjects" which have acquired an added significance and purpose through their connexion with "projects." Thus the project method, instead of being allowed to swamp the whole procedure of the school, as its more moderate advocates fear, will take its place as one of the movements which have ceased to excite teachers, but have made a valuable addition to the common stock of fruitful ideas about teaching. If, says a recent writer, the method were adopted to the exclusion of subjects, "it would be hard to find suitable work for children of different degrees of ability, and it would lack the order and continuity which are necessary for steady advance."¹ This sober judgment will probably prevail.²

¹ See Duncan, *Education of the Ordinary Child*, p. 30.

² Joyce Kenwick's *Junior School Projects* is, as its title indicates, of special interest in this connexion. Its rich variety of examples disposes of the prevalent notion that a project is bound to lead in the end to handwork. H. K. F. Gull's *Projects in the Education of Young Children*, though referring chiefly to infant schools, should also be consulted.

HOW DOES ALL THIS AFFECT YOU?

You who have read thus far may have taught, and in former years may have been taught, in a public elementary school. If so you are, unless you have been uncommonly fortunate, very well aware of the conditions of ordinary classroom instruction, and the question whether you can derive any help from such educational gospels as we have described turns upon the further question whether you are satisfied with traditional methods. The fundamental defect of those methods is, as we have seen, their tacit assumption that all children are just alike and need just the same treatment. That is why a whole class is kept wasting time whilst one bad reader stumbles through a paragraph, and why a whole class is kept repeating spellings and tables and what not, because a few of the children need such repetition. If you are dissatisfied with these futilities you will not be inclined to wait until conditions as to space and equipment have been changed for the better, but will exercise all the ingenuity you possess in order to give every individual child a fair chance of proceeding at his own natural pace, whether slow or rapid. In other words, you will catch something of the spirit of the Montessori method, the Dalton plan, and so on, though you will be unable, even if you so desired, to copy them literally.

COLLECTIVE TEACHING

But there are very good reasons why you should not copy any of them literally. True, we have lived through, and lived down, a period when teaching meant talking, and learning meant listening. Yet there were certain virtues in the collective or class lesson, practised almost as a fine art by many of the older generation of teachers, which make it still an indispensable instrument of education. A story or a poem well rendered, by a teacher who has taken the trouble to cultivate his speaking voice, has a quality of inspiration

which is heightened by the presence of many listeners. All verse, including of course dramatic verse, was, so to say, made to be read or recited aloud, not merely to be pored over with the assistance of editorial notes. As for stories, including those drawn from history, from discovery and travel, from romance and from legend, the possibilities of good collective teaching are manifestly endless. It is to be feared that in recent years the position in these respects has deteriorated in elementary schools, and remained stationary in higher schools. Broadcasting may do much to help, because it may have the effect of bringing first-rate speaking into the very midst of the schoolroom. But schools which are dominated by the prospect of external examinations do not find it easy to accommodate themselves to broadcast programmes.¹

It remains to be added that class teaching lends itself to purposes which are in a sense lowlier than that of inspiration and the exercise of personal influence. If and when certain minimum essentials of memory-work, of which the multiplication tables and the spelling of common words are familiar instances, have been agreed upon, it is, as we saw in an earlier chapter, the special business of the junior school to ensure that these foundations are well and truly laid. For this purpose the quick exchange between teacher and taught in a mental arithmetic lesson or in a spelling bee, shared in by the whole class, is the most effective method.²

SCHOOL BROADCASTING

Though the junior-school child is essentially an active doer rather than a passive listener, yet school broadcasting, like collective teaching, has its uses in the junior school. It is least effective when it tries, and inevitably tries in vain, to take the place of the teacher, who, if he knows his

¹ On class teaching see *Report on Primary School* (H.M.S.O.), pp. 152-3; C. M. Fleming, *Individual Work in Primary Schools*, Chap. I.

² See Milner, *Human Problem in Schools*, p. 268.

business, knows the great difference between a lesson and a lecture. More to the purpose is a dramatic presentation of, say, a story drawn from history, especially if the youngsters are fired with an ambition to act a similar scene themselves, as they very likely will be. But, unquestionably, broadcasting is at its best for educational purposes when the microphone leaves the studio, and goes into the highways and by-ways collecting the very stuff of which life consists. Broadcasting then performs a function which can be performed in no other way. If the song of the nightingale can be heard in one's sitting-room, why not extend the principle so that the school is brought into direct touch with the operations of the mine, the factory, and the market-place? Our war correspondents have brought even the fury of battle into our quiet homes, and in so doing have at any rate shown what can be done to bring reality into school-broadcasting. If the noise of battle, why not the noise of industry? ¹

THE CINEMA

The film, the other modern aid to educational work, not least at the junior stage, remains to be noted. On the general subject one is most impressed by the varying degrees of unsuitability, sometimes amounting to positive harmfulness for young people, of the usual type of film. Still there is much to be said on the other side. Some of the films exhibited have a definitely educational purpose, especially those relating to travel, industry, history, and legend. The well-known film entitled "Drifters," for example, seems to set up, even in the minds of junior children, a close relation between the herring on the dinner-table and the toilers of the sea. A large number of industrial films might be quoted, made not for advertising purposes,

¹ See *Actuality in School*, by G. J. Cons and C. Fletcher, Chap. VII, for an admirable enforcement of this point. The writers hardly seem to do justice, however, to the usual kind of school broadcasting.

but for showing man and his work and for impressing the spectator with the dignity of labour. Here again the instrument is at its best for educational purposes when, as in the case of "Drifters," it brings the children in touch with the actual scene. The point has been well put in a report by one of our local education authorities which states—"more films like 'The Night Mail' are required. This did what no ordinary classroom can do. It gave the child a feeling of actually being on the mail train. And it conveyed, more efficiently than any words could convey, the romance that lies behind the common-place—all the interesting, even exciting, activities that make possible the delivery of next morning's letters . . . The qualities that appeal to children—daring, speed, the grit to overcome obstacles—may be found there just as among gangsters."¹ And if our account of the psychology of junior children is correct, these qualities will make a special appeal to them. They are at a markedly responsive stage, but little has yet been done to meet their needs. "How," it has been pertinently asked, "is a child in a Poplar primary school to observe India or the vegetation of South America? Films are here intensely valuable, but the material available is sadly thin."² Research and experiment by the teaching profession itself, including the junior branch, are needed towards ascertaining what visual aids are appropriate to particular subjects and purposes.

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The following references are additional to those given in the footnotes :—

For constructive criticism of Froebel see in particular Dewey's *The School and Society*, Chap. V, and Kilpatrick's *Froebel's Educational Principles Critically Examined*.

¹ Quoted by Cons and Fletcher, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

² R. W. Moore in a paper read at the Society of Arts, May 1944.

PROBLEMS OF METHOD

The Montessori literature in English is very extensive.

See *The Montessori Method* and D. C. Fisher's *Montessori Manual*.

On the project method see Kilpatrick's *The Project Method* and *Towards a New Education*, papers read at Conference of New Education Fellowship, 1929.

H. Parkhurst, *Education on the Dalton Plan*.

Chapter VIII

THE AUTONOMY OF THE JUNIOR SCHOOL

THE ESSENTIAL STATUS OF THE JUNIOR SCHOOL

Throughout this book it has been assumed that the junior school, for children between the ages of seven or eight and eleven or twelve, has a soul of its own which it is entitled to claim as its own. In these closing remarks this claim is to be emphasised. To speak, as is sometimes done, of the independence of the junior school is to stretch the claim too far. My preference for the word autonomy is meant to mark the fact that while the junior school is in close relation with the infant school or kindergarten at one end, and with the secondary school at the other end, it possesses all the rights of a self-governing community. Teachers and administrators who have been accustomed to the age-range five to fourteen as the beginning and end of the elementary school course, may at first be inclined to think of the junior school as a maimed or even decapitated form of the traditional elementary school. If the considerations brought forward in previous chapters have weight, this attitude is quite wrong. The junior-school period of childhood has its own interest, with its own problems—problems much overlooked and neglected in the past, and considerably different from those of the earlier and later periods of childhood. This view of the junior school has been gaining ground ever since the publication of the Hadow Report on the Primary School, and it is now definitely recognised and stressed in the Education Act of 1944.

THE EXAMINATION EVIL

At its best a junior school is a place in which the child is

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regarded simply as a child, growing up in a certain physical and social environment, without much reference to his or her future occupation. This straightforward and unbiassed outlook has, however, been interfered with and spoiled, not by a distant reference to the means of getting a livelihood, but by a near reference to the kind of school the child is about to enter, a matter which has partly been settled by competitive tests. An inquiry into the working of these tests in past years would elicit somewhat different opinions, depending upon local conditions, such as the supply of secondary education as compared with the demand, and the ambitions of parents for their children. There is no doubt, however, that where the tests have taken the form of examinations, their influence upon the junior school has been bad. To regard preparation for this examination as the chief concern of the junior school, as has sometimes happened, is "to warp or impoverish the curriculum of the school by giving undue prominence to examination subjects,"¹ and to neglect the best educational interests of most of the children. The evil is only reduced, not eradicated, by the use of intelligence tests and school records, because the element of competition still remains. Not only so, but the emphatic verdict of the experimental psychologists is that "the very best means of selection at present within our powers do not justify the sharp separation of the children into two groups, one of which is given so much longer and more expensive education than the other."²

THE STATUS OF THE TEACHER

The tendency to regard the junior school as just a bit cut-off from the traditional elementary school, and to view its curriculum accordingly, is one to be resisted. The junior

¹ *Handbook of Suggestions* (H.M.S.O.), p. 119.

² C. W. Valentine, *Examinations and the Examinee*, p. 13.

school must have a clear objective of its own. The important point emerges that teaching in a junior school is not an inferior job compared with, say, teaching in a senior school. It is different, but not inferior. We have lived down the blunder of regarding the infant school as less important than the school for children over seven, and of rewarding teachers accordingly. That blunder, at any rate, is not being repeated in the case of the junior school, notwithstanding the fears expressed by many teachers when re-organisation was first proposed. They expected, not unnaturally, that, whilst the new senior schools would offer new and great opportunities, the junior schools would merely proceed on the old familiar lines of an elementary school, bereft of the most interesting and worth-while parts of its work. Especially was this view of the situation taken by some men teachers who made what now turns out to have been the profound mistake of regarding even the headship of a junior school as essentially a woman's job. On the contrary, the headship of a mixed junior school is surely the job of the best qualified candidate, whether man or woman.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

In so far as the junior school has been regarded as a place of preparation for the competitive tests which guard the entrance to secondary schools, there has been no autonomy for the junior school. Its aims have been dictated by the requirements of the higher schools, its interests have been concentrated upon its brighter pupils, and its true *raison d'être* as a place of education in which all the children of all the people, whether bright or dull, quick or slow, are given equal consideration has been practically denied or ignored. The automatic passage of the junior-school child into a suitable form of secondary education is the only way of restoring and maintaining the autonomy of the junior school. And that is the way opened up by the Education Act of 1944.

REFERENCES

Report on Primary School (H.M.S.O.).

Handbook of Suggestions (H.M.S.O.), Chap. III.

S. H. Cracknell in *The Problems of the Junior School* (Year-book of Education).

Chapter IX

LAST BUT NOT LEAST

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Only incidental reference has so far been made to religious education in the junior school. It could not be dealt with adequately in connexion with the curriculum, for the simple reason that the most important part of religious education forms no part of the curriculum, to be taught in a classroom as other things are taught. The beginning of a school day has usually, in most types of school, been marked by a ceremony which has little or nothing to do with ordinary lessons, but is a recognition that, above and beyond the common concerns of life, there is a power and a presence which causes men to bow their heads in humility and reverence. This beginning of the day with "an act of collective worship" has recently become (with the rights of conscience duly safe-guarded) the law of the land, so that it takes place in state-provided schools as regularly as in schools provided by religious bodies.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Taking, as we do here, the purely educational point of view, it is obvious to anyone experienced in such matters that the value of this act must depend chiefly upon the personality of the teacher who faces the assembled school, and to whom the children should be able to look up to as guide, philosopher, and friend. This being so, the fundamental duty of school authorities may be summed up in three words—trust the teachers. Choose them carefully, train them adequately, and then trust them. If you cannot do this, all your other precautions, including that of inspection,

will be in vain. The use made of school assembly depends upon what the teacher *is* rather than upon what he says or causes to be said. If you impose upon him rigid rules, the probable response will be formal repetition, done as a duty, like marking the attendance registers and distributing the dinner tickets. But if you trust him he will—if he be fit to be a teacher at all—seize the golden opportunity of giving of his best. His own life may, for example, be more or less consciously guided by the “ultimate belief”¹ that there are three activities of the spirit, the love of truth, of beauty, and of goodness, and that these three are to be exercised equally, and for their own sakes. In other words, he may be convinced that there are certain values, the inculcation of which is even more important than the facts taught in the classroom. If so, he will find ways and means of reaching the hearts and influencing the lives of the children, and, more immediately, of sending the whole school to the day’s work with feelings of “courage, gaiety, and the quiet mind.”² The ways and means he employs may vary. To-day it may be great literature, most likely selected passages from the English Bible, to-morrow it may be great music, the day after it may be the life of a great and good man or woman. In one way or another he will do his best to accomplish the end in view. Furthermore, his choice of hymns and prayers will by no means be left to chance.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

Let us now turn to that part of religious education which consists in instruction, the part which can be put into the curriculum and taught in the classroom. Here the teacher in a junior school is in an easier position than the teacher in a secondary school, because doctrinal instruction in religion for young children is out of keeping with the findings of child psychology. This point has been urged forcibly by a

¹ The title of the late Clutton-Brock’s eloquently suggestive little book.

² The words are those of R. L. Stevenson.

distinguished churchman, who is also an old teacher.¹ The child, he says, not the subject-matter, is the real centre of gravity in modern education, and he contends that formulated doctrine is not for children at the pre-adolescent stage. At this stage, he declares, the issue between simple Bible teaching and definite or doctrinal instruction is no longer a live issue. The latter may be added at a later stage, but for young children the learning of a catechism can only amount to a parrot-like repetition of words with little or no meaning.

SIMPLE BIBLE TEACHING

If the position thus taken up is sound, as I believe it to be, we are left with simple Bible teaching as the appropriate kind of religious instruction in the junior school, and we have next to consider the actual content of such teaching. It has been assumed by those in authority that as soon as—if one may venture to adapt a Dickensian phrase—the right reverends and wrong reverends of every order had come to terms and produced an “agreed syllabus,” no further question could possibly arise. There is good reason to believe, however, that although an overwhelming majority of teachers are in favour of religious instruction in all schools, only a bare majority regard agreed syllabuses with unqualified approval. Like all other syllabuses drawn up by outsiders, for no school in particular, but for all the schools of a whole area, these syllabuses do not and cannot take into account the capacity, the knowledge, and the interests of the individual teacher, nor do they take into account the upbringing and the social outlook of the children he has to teach, which may differ widely from school to school. As time goes on, the difficulty will probably be met by giving the teacher reasonable liberty of interpretation, or even by openly allowing him to use the agreed syllabus as a general guide rather than as a mandate.

¹ Dr A. A. David, when Bishop of Liverpool.

And so we should return once more to the principle already commended in another connexion—trust the teacher.

Here again the position in the junior school is easier than in the secondary school, for the sufficient reason that in the former the instruction is by common consent mostly on the story-telling level. The junior-school teacher who is a born *raconteur*, or who has learnt to tell a story well, is always at an advantage, and by no means least in the Scripture lesson. And if he can manage to let the story speak for itself, without the addition of the tiresome "moral" which used to be, and in some quarters still is, regarded as essential, his teaching will be all the more effective. An incident is related of a little boy who was listening to the story of the Good Samaritan. The story was well told and the boy was entirely absorbed in it. As the story ended he took a deep breath and said, "I'm so glad that man was kind." But then there came from the storyteller a wordy reminder that we ought to feel sorry when we have been unkind, and that God wants us to be helpful. And the bright look faded from the child's face and he got up and walked away. The reader is recommended to ponder over the implications of this simple incident.

REFERENCES

For excellent lists of books see the "Scripture Number" of *The School Library Review* (Vol. IV, No. 1), which is the official organ of the School Libraries Section of the Library Association. The bibliography accompanying a syllabus of religious education for Manchester Education Committee is especially valuable. Foremost among books useful to the junior-school teacher (apart from a children's edition of the Bible itself) are those which provide a social and geographical and historical setting for the stories.

Report on the Primary School (H.M.S.O.), pp. 154-5. (The official *Handbook of Suggestions* makes only brief reference to religious education.)

“Teachers and Religious Education: Results of a Mass Observation Survey” (*Times Educational Supplement*, 11th March 1944).

The chapters on religious education in the Spens Report and the Norwood Report, though bearing directly on secondary education, contain much that in principle is equally applicable to junior schools. Most valuable.



SEVEN TO ELEVEN

THIS book is a survey of some of the problems of the junior school. The history of junior school education is reviewed, and the principles underlying the main developments in the various teaching methods are examined and assessed. There are also chapters investigating the childhood of several men of genius, and the special needs of both gifted and backward children.

The author has spent many years in the study of education, and he writes with a wide knowledge of young children, and a very real affection for them. In this book he is both critical and constructive, and his observations and conclusions will interest all who are concerned with the junior school, as teachers or as parents.

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